

PLANTATION TO SMALL FARM: A HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY
OF THE LOWER BURDEKIN SUGAR INDUSTRY,
1880-1930

by

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This thesis is my own composition and all sources have been acknowledged. No part of this work has been submitted for another degree at The University of Queensland or any other university.



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Table of Contents

	Page
Abstract	vii
List of Plates	x
List of Figures	xi
List of Tables	xiv
Acknowledgements	xviii
Abbreviations	xxi
Glossary of Terms Used	xxii
A Note on Measurements	xxiv
A Note on Place Names	xxv
<u>CHAPTER 1:</u> <u>AIMS AND APPROACHES</u>	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Background	
1.3 Themes	5
1.4 A Regional Study ... The Precedents and Reasons	14
1.5 Thesis Organization	18
1.6 Conclusions	23
<u>CHAPTER 2:</u> <u>RECONSTRUCTING THE PAST</u>	
2.1 Introduction	25
2.2 Sources	25
2.3 The Geographic Data Base	
2.3.1 Introduction	29
2.3.2 The Land Opening Process	29
2.3.3 Locating the Farmers	32
2.4 Map Construction	32
2.5 Regional Divisions	36
2.6 Conclusions	38
<u>CHAPTER 3:</u> <u>THE PHYSICAL SETTING</u>	
3.1 Introduction	39
3.2 Geomorphology	39
3.3 Soils	43
3.4 Vegetation	45
3.5 Climate	48

	<u>Page</u>
3.6 Groundwater	51
3.7 Conclusions	53
 <u>CHAPTER 4: THE PASTORAL BASIS: 1860-1876</u>	
4.1 Introduction	54
4.2 Queensland Land Legislation, 1860-1878: A Brief Overview	54
4.3 European Occupation of the Lower Burdekin, 1860-1878	60
4.4 Conclusions	71
 <u>CHAPTER 5: THE PLANTATION PERIOD: 1877-1891</u>	
5.1 Introduction	72
5.2 Queensland's Sugar Industry, 1877-1891: An Overview	72
5.3 The Arrival of the Planters and Farmers	
5.3.1 Introduction	78
5.3.2 Pastoral Subdivisions and Land Purchases, 1877-1885	82
5.3.3 Pastoral Subdivisions and Land Purchases, 1885-1891	84
5.3.4 Selectors of the 1880s: Occupations and Patterns of Selections	93
5.3.5 Reasons for Selection	97
5.3.6 Closer Settlement in 1891: An Overview	98
5.4 The Sugar Industry is Established, 1881-1884	99
5.5 Stagnation and Change, 1885-1891	115
5.6 Plantation Characteristics	133
5.7 Conclusions	147
 <u>CHAPTER 6: THE EMERGENCE OF YEOMEN FARMERS: 1892-1901</u>	
6.1 Introduction	151
6.2 Supporting the Small Farmers	151
6.3 Further Attempts at Further Closer Settlement	157
6.4 Plantation Expansion	163
6.5 The Growth in Small Farmers	172

6.6	The Jarvisfield Central Mill Scheme	190
6.7	Irrigation in the 1890s	205
6.8	Conclusions	207

CHAPTER 7: FEDERAL INTERVENTION: 1902-1912

7.1	Introduction	210
7.2	Queensland's Sugar Industry, 1902-1912: An Overview	210
7.3	Closer Settlement on the Lower Burdekin, 1902-1912	
7.3.1	Introduction	219
7.3.2	Crown Land Openings, 1902-1910	222
7.3.3	The Inkerman Estate, 1910-1915	225
7.3.4	Freehold Estate Subdivisions, 1902-1913	239
7.3.5	Overview	242
7.4	Reluctant Employers of Europeans, 1902-1905: The Lower Burdekin Sugar Growers' Reaction to the <u>Pacific Island Labourers Act of 1901</u>	246
7.5	The Emergence of the Proprietary Central Mills, 1906-1912	
7.5.1	Introduction	252
7.5.2	Ending the Plantations	252
7.5.3	Expansion in the Mill's Catchment Areas	258
7.5.4	The Transition to 'White' Labourers, 1906-1912	264
7.5.5	Overview	267
7.6	The Second Attempt to Establish the Jarvisfield Central Mill	267
7.7	Irrigation in the 1900s	279
7.8	Conclusions	282

CHAPTER 8: THE INKERMAN AND HAUGHTON RIVER DISTRICT EXPANSION: 1913-1920

8.1	Introduction	285
8.2	An Industry of National Importance	285
8.3	Land Openings on the Lower Burdekin, 1915-1920	297
8.4	A New Mill for the Lower Burdekin	300

8.6	Farmer Hardship	330
8.7	The Fight Against Drought: The Inkerman Irrigation Scheme	347
8.8	Conclusions	354
<u>CHAPTER 9:</u>	<u>REASSIGNMENTS AND RESTRICTIONS: THE IMPACT OF INVICTA MILL AND OVERPRODUCTION ON THE LOWER BURDEKIN SUGAR INDUSTRY, 1921-1930</u>	
9.1	Introduction	358
9.2	Post War Controls	358
9.3	Land Openings on the Lower Burdekin, 1921-1930	367
9.4	Keeping Invicta Mill Supplied	369
9.5	Avoiding Overproduction	393
9.6	Farms and Farmers	398
9.7	Conclusions	409
<u>CHAPTER 10:</u>	<u>THE LOWER BURDEKIN SUGAR INDUSTRY, 1880-1930: RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT</u>	412
<u>APPENDICES</u>		
Appendix 1	Data Collection Sheet for Land Opening Details	427
Appendix 2	The Ayr to Stuart Tramway: A Brief History	428
Appendix 3	Occupational Background of Drysdale Bros.' and Australian Estates' Tenant Farmers, 1906-1912	433
<u>ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY</u>		435

Abstract

The subject of this thesis is the growth and development of a regional sugar production system between 1880 and 1930. The region selected for study was the Lower Burdekin. Apart from the uniqueness of extensive irrigation, the Lower Burdekin was a microcosm of what occurred throughout much of coastal Queensland between 1880 and 1930.

Particular attention in this study will be given to the following seven issues: the changing spatial organization of the system (i.e. expansion of cropping, changing allocation of suppliers to the mills); system structure (i.e. production units); system regulation; the impact of governmental policies on the system; the influence of autonomous local decision makers; the significance of the resource base; and the role of technological change.

In considering the first issue, it will be argued that the spread of cane growing throughout the region was dependent upon the physical environment (i.e. soils and topography), land availability and the location of the mills and transport networks. Also, it will be shown that the pattern of expansion was ordered, not haphazard. Accompanying these changes was another series of spatial patterns that were associated with the changing allocation of suppliers to the various mills. The development of these arrangements was influenced by the location of the district's rail network, competition between millers and formal contractual agreements between miller and supplier. It will be noted, however, that there was not a profusion of different allocation patterns, but that the mills quickly developed "core" localities from which they drew their cane, and that subsequent change occurred only at the extremities of the catchment areas.

The production system established on the Lower Burdekin in the early 1880s was based on neoplantations. This system was still in existence in 1905, although it only embraced three units (i.e. Pioneer, Kalamia and Seaforth estates) tied to two mills. Several of the incipient neoplantations established in the early 1880s (e.g. Airdmillan, Drynie, Maidavale) failed to fully develop because of the depression in the sugar industry in the late 1880s forcing their owners to abandon their plans or into insolvency. The durability of the surviving neoplantations was in large measure dependent upon John Drysdale, who was the unusually

capable manager of the estates and mills and equally effective in stopping moves for a co-operative mill. His success was founded upon an ability to secure cheap, indentured labour to work the neoplantations. Despite the persistence of the neoplantations, it will be argued that central mills supplied by small farms worked by 'whites' would emerge. This certainty was a result of the broader socio-political forces that were in operation, such as the White Australia policy, agrarianism which favoured small-scale farming and opposition from the trade union movement to indentured workers.

A feature of the development of the Lower Burdekin sugar industry was the regulation of the operations of the planters-cum-millers and small farmers. It will be suggested that the emergence of this characteristic was inevitable because of two factors: first, the need of the millers to have tight control over the crop's production and harvest to ensure an efficient supply of appropriate cane to the mill; and second, the national importance of the sugar industry which resulted in government intervention to ensure the industry's prosperity, but within a controlled context to avoid overproduction.

Governmental policies in the areas of land disposal, infrastructure provision and industry protection and support had some bearing on the evolution of the Lower Burdekin sugar industry. Inputs of capital and labour from the millers and small farmers, however, were also essential therefore, governments had a more facilitative rather than a critically decisive role in this study. Indeed, many of the important decisions which shaped the Lower Burdekin sugar industry were made by local decision-makers, the most important being John Drysdale.

The physical environment as mentioned above partially influenced the distribution of cane growing throughout the region. Low and erratic yearly rainfall also shaped the region's sugar industry, although its impact was on the amount of cane that could be cultivated and yields, not on where the crop could be grown. To reduce this impact the Lower Burdekin planters and farmers resorted to irrigation.

Advances in milling technology also contributed to change in the Lower Burdekin sugar industry, for an infusion of new techniques and machinery into the mills in the early 1890s set the scene for the increased output between 1895 and 1915 as new areas were brought under

cultivation to meet the expanded capacities of the upgraded factories. The limited introduction of machinery into the field after 1910, however, probably had minimal impact on the industry's evolution.

It is concluded that the special contributions of this investigation are twofold. First, the study has tried to integrate the forces of social change occurring in Queensland and Australia with those specific local circumstances to show how they in combination shaped the evolution of a regional sugar production system. Second, it has answered some of the issues treated too briefly in the general histories, such as the development of mill catchment areas and the role of the planters-cum-millers in influencing the regulation of the production system and supporting their small suppliers. Together these findings will contribute to the greater understanding of the development of the Queensland sugar industry before 1930. As such this study supports Meinig's assertion that history and geography must be written "not from the top down, but from the bottom up".

List of Plates

<u>Plate</u>		<u>Page</u>
1	Seaforth Mill, c. 1890	102
2	Kalamia Mill, c. 1890	102
3	Two views of Pioneer Mill, c. 1888	108
4	Melanesians loading sugar-cane, Pioneer plantation, c. 1888	114
5	A reputed photograph of the Melanesian labourers on Kalamia plantation	114
6	John Drysdale	122
7	Two views of suction pipes and spear wells on the Lower Burdekin, 1910	126
8	Melanesian labourers loading cane at a farm-side ramp reputedly designed by John Drysdale	175
9	A locomotive bringing loaded cane to Pioneer Mill, c. 1890	175
10	Pioneer Mill, 1897	197
11	Seaforth Mill, c. 1895	197
12	A gang of cane cutters, Ayr, c. 1905	248
13	Hand planting on the Lower Burdekin, 1910	268
14	A 'drop' planter or cane planting machine, 1920	268
15(a)	An overhead derrick at Hodel Siding, 1911	269
15(b)	An overhead gantry at Poopoonbah Siding, c. 1920	269
16	Melanesians unloading cane for Pioneer Mill, c. 1888	271
17	Rakes working to unload cane at Pioneer Mill	271
18	Invicta Mill near completion, 1920	329
19	Kalamia Mill, c. 1919	341
20	Pioneer Mill, 1919	341
21	Building the powerhouse for the Inkerman Irrigation Scheme, 1921	353
22	Sinking irrigation cylinders for the wells of the Inkerman Irrigation Scheme	353
23	Inkerman Mill, 1923	374
24	Invicta Mill, c. 1930	374
25	Kalamia Mill undergoing extensive alterations, 1926	390
26	Building of the new spray pond at Kalamia Mill, 1926	390
27	A farmer's irrigation plant and engine house at Airdmillan, 1910	404
28	An irrigation plant being driven by a tractor, c. 1925	404

List of Figures

<u>Figure</u>		<u>Page</u>
1.1	Location of the Study Area	2
1.2	A Simplified Schema of Crown Land Disposal on the the Lower Burdekin, 1860-1930	30
2.2	Localities within the Lower Burdekin Region	33
2.3	Queensland's sugar growing regions	37
3.1	Geomorphology of the Burdekin Delta	40
3.2	Topographic Features of the Lower Burdekin	42
3.3	Soils of the Lower Burdekin	44
3.4	Vegetation of the Lower Burdekin	47
3.5	Monthly Rainfall Variability, Ayr	50
4.1	The Lower Burdekin Pastoral Runs, 1864	61
4.2	Clarendon Stuart's Survey Plan of part of Rita Island, 1864	64
4.3	Pastoral Resumptions on the Lower Burdekin, 1868	67
4.4	Crown Land Selections on the Lower Burdekin, 1869- 1876	69
5.1	Crown Land Selections on the Lower Burdekin, 1877- 1884	83
5.2	Types of Crown Land Selections on the Lower Burdekin, 1885-1891	85
5.3	Pastoral Resumptions and Consolidations on the Lower Burdekin, 1885-1887	87
5.4	The Lower Burdekin Estates, 1885	91
5.5	The Subdivision of Airdmillan Estate, 1889	93
5.6	Land owned by the Planters and the N.A.P.C., 1884	96
5.7	A Sketch Plan of Airdmillan, Kalamia and Seaforth Sugar Estates, c. 1885	100
5.8	A Sketch Plan of Pioneer Estate, 1888	145
6.1	The Location of Queensland's Government Funded Central Mills	153
6.2	Categories of Crown Land opened to selection on the Lower Burdekin, 1897-1901	159
6.3	Types of Crown Land Selections on the Lower Burdekin, 1897-1901	161
6.4	Land Leased/Acquired by Australian Estates, 1892-1898	164
6.5	Land Leased by Drysdale Bros., 1892-1901	164
6.6	The Location of Farmers Supplying Pioneer and Kalamia Mills, 1900	177

<u>Figure</u>		<u>Page</u>
7.1	Categories of Crown Land Opened to Selection on the Lower Burdekin, 1902-1910	223
7.2	Land Purchases by the N.A.P.C. on the Lower Burdekin, 1884-1906	226
7.3	The Inkerman Estate: The Lower Burdekin Freehold Lands Purchased from the N.A.P.C. by the Queensland Government in 1910	231
7.4	Crown land Openings on the Lower Burdekin, 1911-1914	233
7.5	The Year of Selection of the Inkerman Estate Blocks	234
7.6	Estate Subdivisions on the Lower Burdekin, 1903-1911	240
7.7	Land Purchased by the Airdmillan Land Company, 1911-1912	243
7.8	Acres Selected on the Lower Burdekin, 1902-1915	244
7.9	Land Purchased by Drysdale Bros. and Australian Estates on the Lower Burdekin, 1901-1908	256
7.10	The Location of Farmers Supplying Pioneer and Kalamia Mills, 1906	262
7.11	The Location of Farmers Supplying Pioneer and Kalamia Mills, 1912	263
8.1	Land Openings on the Lower Burdekin, 1916-1920	298
8.2	The Location of Farmers on the Southern Side of the Burdekin River Reported to be Growing Sugar-Cane in 1913	301
8.3	The Location of Farmers Supplying Pioneer and Kalamia Mills, 1915	311
8.4	The Location of Farmers Supplying Inkerman Mill, 1917	317
8.5	The Area Proposed to be Covered by the Inkerman Irrigation Scheme	351
9.1	Australian Raw Sugar Production and Overseas Trade, 1909-1931	361
9.2	Freehold Estate Subdivisions on the Lower Burdekin, 1921-1930	368
9.3	The Location of the Ingham Line District in Relation to the Haughton River District	377
9.4	Farmers Reassigned to Kalamia Mill, 1926-1931	388
9.5	The Areas Assigned to Invicta Mill, 1930	396
9.6	The Catchment Areas of Pioneer, Kalamia and Inkerman Mills, 1930	397
9.7	The Catchment Areas of the Lower Burdekin Mills, 1982	399

<u>Figure</u>		<u>Page</u>
9.8	Tons of Sugar per Acre Harvested on the Lower Burdekin, 1883-1930	406
10.1	The spread of sugar-cane growing on the Lower Burdekin, 1881-1921	413

List of Tables

<u>Table</u>		<u>Page</u>
1.1	Secondary Sources on the history of the Queensland Sugar Industry, 1860-1930, classified by Region	17
2.1	Sources used to locate the Lower Burdekin Plantations and Cane Farmers, 1880-1930	34
3.1	Rainfall at Selected Stations on the Lower Burdekin (mm)	49
3.2	Average Annual Rainfall at Selected Stations in Queensland's Sugar-Growing Regions (mm)	49
3.3	Temperatures at Ayr (°C)	49
3.4	Total Yearly Rainfall (mm) for the Lower Burdekin, 1880-1930	52
4.1	Distribution of Sugar-Cane Acreage, Queensland, 1866-1878	57
5.1	Distribution of Sugar-Cane Acreage, Queensland, 1879-1891	74
5.2	Crown Land Selection on the Lower Burdekin, 1868-1891	82
5.3	Crown Land Resumptions and Selections on the Lower Burdekin, 1885-1891	87
5.4	Details on the Rate of Selection of the Airdmillan Estate Subdivisions of 1889	93
5.5	Acres of Crown Land secured by Various Groups of Selectors on the Lower Burdekin, 1877-1891	94
5.6	The Size and Number of Blocks of Crown Land Selected on the Lower Burdekin, 1877-1891	97
5.7	Tons of Sugar Produced by the Lower Burdekin Mills, 1883-1891	107
5.8	Growers of Cane for the Lower Burdekin Mills, 1886-1891	117
5.9	Crop Acreages on the Lower Burdekin, 1886-1891	120
5.10	The Number of Melanesians Employed on the Lower Burdekin Estates, 1884-1892	130
5.11	Initial Establishment Costs (in £) for the Lower Burdekin Plantations	136
5.12	The Size of the Lower Burdekin Plantations/Estates versus the Acreage under Cane in 1884 and 1887	138
5.13	Running Costs (in £) of Pioneer Plantation, 1885-1891	144
6.1	Distribution of Sugar-Cane Acreage in Queensland, 1892-1901	155

<u>Table</u>		<u>Page</u>
6.2	Losses and Profits (in £) Incurred by Kalamia and Seaforth Plantations, 1896-1901	168
6.3	The Number of Melanesians Employed on the Lower Burdekin, 1892-1904	170
6.4	The Number of Melanesians and Japanese Employed on Pioneer Plantation at the Time of Inspection by the Inspector of Pacific Islanders, 1894-1901	170
6.5	Tons of Cane Crushed on the Lower Burdekin Classified by its Grower, 1897-1901	172
6.6	The Number of Suppliers per Locality in Pioneer Mill's Catchment Area, 1893-1901	174
6.7	The Number of Suppliers per Locality in Kalamia Mill's Catchment Area, 1898-1901	174
6.8	Racial Composition of the Lower Burdekin Farmers, 1893-1901	180
6.9	Tons of Cane Harvested by Different Racial Groups on the Lower Burdekin, 1893-1901	180
6.10	The Number of Farmers on the Lower Burdekin Classified by the Tons of Cane Harvested, 1895-1901	182
6.11	The Number of Farms in the Ayr Petty Sessions District Classified by the Acreage Cultivated, 1892-1901	182
6.12	Land Tenure of the Lower Burdekin Small Farmers, 1893-1901	185
6.13	Farmer Indebtedness (in £) to Drysdale Bros. on 31 December each year from 1894-1901	189
6.14	Crop Acreages on the Lower Burdekin, 1892-1901	191
6.15	Sugar Output (in tons) of the Lower Burdekin Mills, 1893-1901	204
6.16	Irrigation Statistics for the Lower Burdekin, 1892-1901	206
7.1	The Percentage of Sugar-Cane Acreage Grown and Harvested by 'White' Labour by Queensland Region, 1902-1906	213
7.2	Distribution of Sugar-Cane Acreage, Queensland, 1902-1912	215
7.3	Crown Land Openings on the Lower Burdekin, 1902-1910	224
7.4	Recorded Residence of Inkerman Estate Selectors, 1911-1915	238

<u>Table</u>		<u>Page</u>
7.5	Recorded Occupation of Inkerman Estate Selectors, 1911-1915	238
7.6	Tons of Cane Crushed on the Lower Burdekin Classified by its Grower, 1901-1912	250
7.7	Tons of Cane Crushed at the Lower Burdekin Mills, 1902-1912	251
7.8	Tons of Cane Harvested from Pioneer and Kalamia Estates According to the Location on the Estate, 1906-1912	254
7.9	Cumulative Acreage Leased by Drysdale Bros. to Tenants, 1905-1912	256
7.10	The Number of Suppliers per Locality in Pioneer Mill's Catchment Area, 1902-1912	259
7.11	The Number of Suppliers per Locality in Kalamia Mill's Catchment Area, 1902-1912	260
7.12	The Tons of Cane Harvested by 'Black' and 'White' Labourers on the Lower Burdekin, 1908-1910	265
7.13	Irrigation Statistics for the Lower Burdekin, 1902-1912	280
8.1	Distribution of Sugar-Cane Acreage, Queensland, 1913-1920	296
8.2	The Number of Suppliers per Locality in Pioneer Mill's Catchment Area, 1913-1920	302
8.3	Tons of Cane Crushed at the Lower Burdekin Mills, 1913-1920	303
8.4	Tons of Cane Harvested by Pacific Islander and Asiatic Farmers on the Lower Burdekin, 1898-1915	305
8.5	The Number of Suppliers per Locality in Kalamia Mill's Catchment Area, 1912, 1915, 1916, 1919 and 1920	312
8.6	The Number of Suppliers per Locality in Inkerman Mill's Catchment Area, 1916, 1917 and 1919	315
8.7	Tons of Cane Crushed at Inkerman Mill Classified by the Localities from which it was Harvested, 1916-1920	319
8.8	Crop Acreages on the Lower Burdekin, 1913-1920	345
8.9	Percentage Retention Rate Amongst Suppliers of Kalamia and Pioneer Mills, 1901-1920	345
8.10	Irrigation Statistics for the Lower Burdekin, 1913-1920	348
9.1	Distribution of Sugar-Cane Acreage, Queensland, 1921-1930	360

<u>Table</u>		<u>Page</u>
9.2	Local and Export Prices Received for Australian Raw Sugar, 1915-1930	361
9.3	Tons of Cane from the Haughton River, Ayr-Home Hill and Ingham-Line Localities Crushed at Invicta Mill, 1921-1930	370
9.4	Tons of Cane Crushed at Pioneer, Kalamia and Inkerman Mills, 1921-1930	370
9.5	The Number of Suppliers per Locality in Inkerman Mill's Catchment Area, 1921-1930	372
9.6	The Number of Suppliers per Locality in Inkerman Mill's Catchment Area, 1921-1930	383
9.7	Tons of Cane Crushed at Inkerman Mill classified by the Localities from which it was Harvested, 1921-1930	384
9.8	The Number of Suppliers per Locality in Kalamia Mill's Catchment Area, 1921-1926 and 1929-1930	385
9.9	Acreage, Number of Farmers and Peak Tonnages Allocated to the Lower Burdekin Mills in 1930	395
9.10	Crop Acreages on the Lower Burdekin, 1920-1930	400
9.11	Irrigation Statistics for the Lower Burdekin, 1920-1930	402
9.12	The Area Watered by the Inkerman Irrigation Scheme, 1922-1930	402
9.13	Average Acreage Harvested by the Supplier of Pioneer, Inkerman and Kalamia Mills, 1907-1930	403
9.14	Cane Growing Costs for the Burdekin-Mackay Districts	408
9.15	British and Foreign Farmers in Queensland Sugar-Cane Growing Regions, 1929	408
10.1	Queensland Raw Sugar Production by Region, 1987	425

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Abbreviations

A.E.M. Co.	Australian Estates and Mortgage Co. Ltd.
A.E.R.	Australian Estates Records
A.N.Z.M. Co.	Australian and New Zealand Mortgage Company
A.N.U.	Australian National University, Canberra
A.S.C.	Ayr Shire Council
A.S.J.	Australian Sugar Journal
A.S.P.A.	Australian Sugar Producers' Association
A.S.P.A.R.	Australian Sugar Producers' Association Records
C.B.E.	Cleveland Bay Express
C.P.D.	Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates
C.P.P.	Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers
C.S.R. Co.	Colonial Sugar Refining Company
H.R.F.A.	Haughton River Farmers' Association
H.S.C.	Haughton Sugar Co. Ltd.
H.S.C.G.	Haughton Sugar Company Ltd., Giru
H.H.O.	Home Hill Observer
I.F.G.A.	Inkerman Farmers' and Graziers' Association
I.M.C.	Inkerman Mill, Carstairs
J.C.U.	James Cook University
J.O.L.	John Oxley Library
J. of R.H.S.Q.	Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland
K.M.A.	Kalamia Mill, Ayr
M.U.A.	Melbourne University Archives
N.A.P.C.	North Australian Pastoral Company
N.Q.H.	North Queensland Herald
N.Q.R.	North Queensland Register
P.D.T.	Port Denison Times
P.M.B.	Pioneer Mill, Brandon
PMR	Pioneer Mill Records
Q.E.R.	Queensland Electoral Rolls
Q.G.G.	Queensland Government Gazette
Q.P.D.	Queensland Parliamentary Debates
Q.P.P.	Queensland Parliamentary Papers
Q.S.A.	Queensland State Archives
Q.V.P.	Queensland Votes and Proceedings
S.J.T.C.	Journal of Sugar and Tropical Cultivator
T.D.B.	Townsville Daily Bulletin
T.T.O.	Townsville Titles Office
U.M.A. Co.	Union Mortgage and Agency Company

Glossary of Terms Used

Assignment: A particular area of land on which sugar-cane may be grown for delivery to a particular mill. Assignments are granted and controlled by the Central Sugar-Cane Prices Board.

Bagasse/Megass: The term applied to the final crushed fibre remaining after milling. It consists of fibre, water and a small quantity of sugar. Bagasse is the main source of fuel in providing steam for milling operations.

Commercial Cane Sugar (c.c.s.): A figure calculated from the analysis of cane. It is a measure of the quantity of pure sugar (sucrose) which may be extracted from cane at a given level of milling efficiency.

Crop Lien: A crop lien was a legal contract between the miller and the sugar grower, which involved the farmer surrendering the ownership of his crop in return for credit. Once the crops were harvested the farmer's debts were reduced by the amount the produce was worth.

Maceration: The process which involves the saturation of the bagasse with warm water after it passes through the first set of rollers.

Massecuite: The mixture of crystals and syrup produced by crystallization in a vacuum pan. The term is French for "cooked mass".

Molasses: Uncrystallized syrup produced when massecuite is treated in centrifugal machines.

Net titre (n.t.): This is an approximate measure of the percentage of pure white sugar which may be recovered from a batch of raw sugar. It provides a method whereby raw sugars of various qualities can be reduced to a standard or common basis, usually 94 n.t. The net titre of sugar is calculated by subtracting the reducing sugar content and five times the ash content from the polarization of the sugar. It is used in Australia as a basis for payment for raw sugar produced by the mills.

Pure Obtainable Cane Sugar (p.o.c.s.): A formula developed by Dr. G. Kottman of the C.S.R. Co. in the early 1880s as a means of calculating the amount of cane sugar in sugar-cane capable theoretically of being recovered by milling, if certain high standards of milling performance could be reached. The C.S.R. Co. first used this formula at Childers Mill in 1899.

Raw Sugar: The sugar crystals separated from massecuite in centrifugal machines in a raw sugar mill.

Ratoons: A second crop of cane springing from the remaining sugar-cane roots after harvesting.

Season: The crushing season in the Australian sugar industry throughout this study period refers to the period from June/July to December/January when mills are in operation. Thus, the 1925 season would have referred to cane planted prior to 1925 but harvested and crushed during 1925. This season is used for statistical purposes.

A Note on Measurements

All the chapters for this thesis have been written from primary sources published before the introduction of decimal currency and the program for metric conversion. Consequently, imperial weights and measures and sterling currency have been used. No attempt has been made to provide equivalents in the text. However, common conversions are given below.

<u>Area</u>		<u>Mass</u>	
Acres	ha		
1	= .405	ounce	= 28.3 g
10	= 4.047	pound	= 454 g
100	= 40.469	hundredweight	= 50.8 kg
1,000	= 404.686	ton	= 1.02 tonne
1 square mile	= 2.59 square kilometres		

<u>Length</u>		<u>Volume</u>	
1 foot	= 0.305 m.	pint	= 568 ml
1 mile	= 1.609 km.	quart	= 1.14 l
10 miles	= 16.093 km.	gallon	= 4.551
100 miles	= 160.934 km.		

Currency

The British pound was the basic unit of currency in Australia during the colonial period. The post-Federation Australian pound remained identical in value to the British pound until the 1930s depression, when it was devalued to eighty percent of the pound sterling. In 1966 Australia changed to decimal currency and £1 became \$2. The twenty shillings in each pound became 200 cents, the twelve pence in each shilling became ten cents, sixpence became five cents, but there was no exact equivalent for one penny.

A Note on Place Names

Over the passage of time, the spelling of various place names on the Lower Burdekin has altered. In addition, at least three place names have completely changed. To avoid confusion modern spellings of place names and modern place names have been used throughout this thesis. However, earlier spellings/names are listed below.

Late Nineteenth Century/

Early Twentieth Century

Airdale
Ching Do Siding
Houghton River
Labatt's Lagoon
McDesme/MacDesme
Minkon Siding
Norrum

Modern

Airville
Poopoonbah Siding
Haughton River
Labatt Lagoon
Macdesme
Giru
Norham

Acknowledgement of Sources

The reference to published material in this thesis follows the style recommended by the Modern Language Association (1984). Acknowledgement of primary sources is based on the style recommended by the Queensland State Archives.

CHAPTER 1

AIMS AND APPROACHES

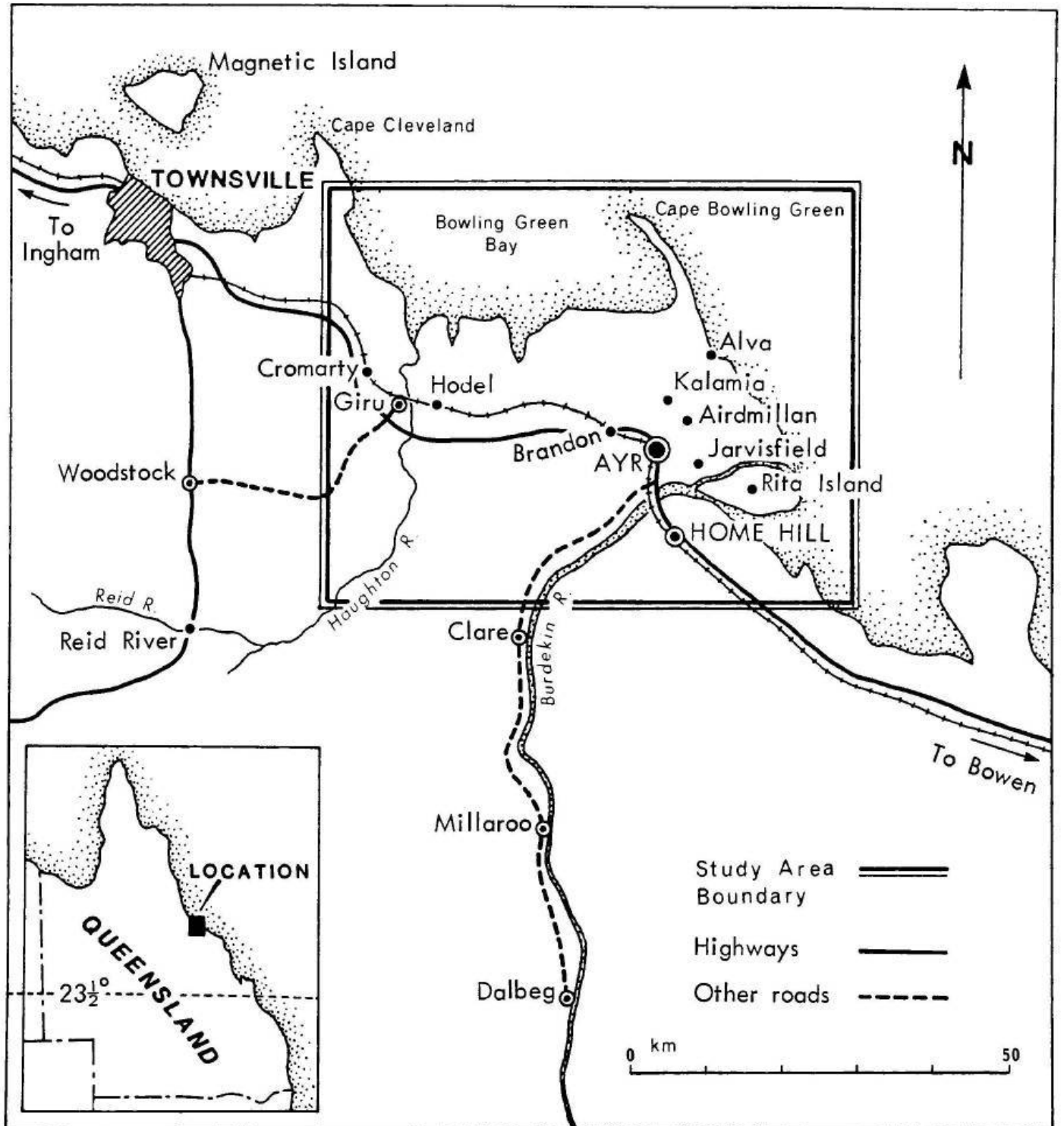
1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study is a historical geography of the sugar industry on the Lower Burdekin (see Figure 1.1). It details the changes that occurred in the industry's areal extent, production unit and labour supply between 1880 and 1930. As a region the Lower Burdekin is at a comparatively small scale in terms of Queensland or Australia. However, apart from the uniqueness of extensive irrigation, the Lower Burdekin was a microcosm of what was occurring throughout much of coastal Queensland from Cairns to Brisbane between 1880 and 1930. Here on the Lower Burdekin sugar-cane played a crucial role as a staple, despite the locational and environmental problems, especially lack of water, faced by planters and farmers in cultivating it as a crop. Here on the Lower Burdekin the sugar industry between 1885 and 1910 underwent the same transformation from a plantation based system worked by Melanesian labourers into a small farm based central milling system worked by 'white' labour that happened throughout all of the Queensland sugar-growing regions. Lastly, here on the Lower Burdekin the sugar industry developed a tightly regulated structure which is still characteristic of the industry today.

1.2 BACKGROUND

From 1650 onwards the production of sugar-cane for sale in international markets for domestic and industrial consumption was dominated by the plantation as the unit of production. The plantation was the institution developed by European colonizers in response to low latitude environments of relatively open resources for the production of an export crop or crops. In the absence of sufficient European settlers willing to labour under tropical or sub-tropical conditions, the plantation came to be dependent on slaves.¹ However, the freeing of slaves in all of the sugar growing regions of the New World between 1834 and 1888 did not bring about an immediate end to this type of agricultural

¹ P.P. Courtenay, Plantation Agriculture (rev. ed., Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1980), pp. 44-45; Adrian Graves and Peter Richardson, "Plantations in the Political Economy of Colonial Sugar Production: Natal and Queensland, 1860-1914", Journal of Southern African Studies, 6 (1980): 214.



production. For instance, the retention of the plantation in Mauritius, Trinidad and British Guiana was achieved by the importation of indentured workers, usually Indians.² Furthermore, the rapid growth of the international economy throughout the nineteenth century that created an expanding demand for tropical products, led to plantations, or more aptly neoplantations, emerging in other parts of the world (e.g., Natal, Fiji, Queensland), although in all instances the planters relied on contract labour.³ Despite this durability of the plantation mode of production, there was a movement between 1880 and 1920 in several parts of the world (e.g., Fiji, Mauritius, Trinidad, Louisiana, Queensland) towards the smaller unit of production or the cane farm.⁴ The uniformity of institutions in sugar production was forever lost.

The transition from plantations staffed by indentured Melanesians to small farms worked by 'whites' that occurred in the Australian sugar industry between 1890 and 1906 has not been the subject of inquiry at the state or local levels per se by Australian historians, economic historians or geographers, with the exception of Higman who explored the topic within northern New South Wales.⁵ Nevertheless, the topic has been examined in varying degrees in the numerous studies done on indentured Melanesians,⁶ who formed the bulk of the industry's labour requirements until the early 1900s. For example, Graves has stressed

² For details on indentured labour in various sugar industries in the late nineteenth century see Stanley L. Engerman, "Contract Labor, Sugar and Technology in the Nineteenth Century", Journal of Economic History, 43 (1983): 652-653; S. Marks and P. Richardson (eds.), International Labour Perspectives: Historical Perspectives (London: Institute of Commonwealth Studies, 1984); and Hugh Tinker, A New System of Slavery. The Export of Indian Labour Overseas (Institute of Race Relations, London: Oxford Uni. Press, 1974), pp. 61-115.

³ Courtenay, Plantation Agriculture, p. 140; Graves and Richardson, "Plantations in the Political Economy of Sugar Production", p. 214.

⁴ Engerman, "Contract Labor, Sugar and Technology in the Nineteenth Century", p. 657.

⁵ B. Higman, "Sugar Plantations and Yeoman Farming in New South Wales", Annals of the Association of American Geographers, 58 (1968): 697-719.

⁶ For studies on the Melanesians in Queensland see references in the bibliography to Birch (1965, 1966); Corris (1970, 1972, 1973), Graves (1975, 1984), Harris (1968), Hunt (1978), McGrath (1976), Mercer (1981), Mercer and Moore (1978), Moore (1985), Saunders (1975, 1976, 1978, 1982, 1984) and Shlomowitz (1979, 1981, 1982a, 1982b, 1984, 1985).

that the rising costs of recruiting Melanesians was an important factor leading to the decline of plantations,⁷ Corris and Birch highlight the significance of the White Australia policy in producing opposition to Melanesian labour and therefore the northern plantations,⁸ while Hunt suggests that the development of the trade union movement led to agitation against the employers and supporters of coloured labour.⁹ However, despite this work on the history of the Queensland sugar industry, there still does not exist a comprehensive analysis of the number of plantations and their social and economic characteristics, spatial distribution and rate of demise. Furthermore, given the dearth of scholarly work on the interwar period in the Queensland sugar industry¹⁰ and also given that the research emphasis on indentured Melanesians is mainly concerned with the period 1860-1986, there remains a distinct research gap covering the evolution of the small farming system of sugar growing in the state.

Since the focus of many of the above studies has been on the attributes of the Melanesian labour supply, this thesis instead will concentrate on the production unit, the plantation and the central mill supplied by small farms. The study will identify the processes which brought about the change from one institution to another at a regional level and influenced the allocation of suppliers to the district's various mills.

⁷ Adrian Graves, "The Abolition of the Queensland Labour Trade: Politics or Profit" in Essays in the Political Economy of Australasian Capitalism, Eds. E.L. Wheelwright and K. Buckley (Sydney: Aust. & New Zealand Book Company, 1985), Vol. 4, p. 53.

⁸ A. Birch, "The Implementation of the White Australia Policy in the Queensland Sugar Industry, 1901-1912", Australian Journal of Politics and History, 11 (1965): 198-210; P. Corris, "White Australia in Action: the repatriation of Pacific Islanders from Queensland", Historical Studies, 15 (1972): 237-50.

⁹ D. Hunt, "Exclusivism and Unionism: Europeans in the Queensland Sugar Industry", in Who Are Our Enemies?: Racism and the Australian Working Class, Eds. A. Curthoys and A. Markus (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1978), pp. 80-95.

¹⁰ The most scholarly works on the inter-war period in the Queensland sugar industry are M. Carter, "The Sugar Industry Since 1917", B.A. Hons. thesis, Uni. of Queensland, 1974, and Adrian Graves, "The State and the Development of the Queensland Cane Sugar Industry", 31 pp. paper presented at the Conference on Crises and Change in the International Sugar Economy, 1914-1939, and the 1980s, Norwich, 1987.

More importantly, by continuing the study until 1930 an assessment will be made of the performance of the system of central mills supplied by small farms at the local level during the first two decades after its emergence in Queensland in the 1900s. As such this work will expand our understanding of the changes that occurred in the Queensland sugar industry not only at the turn of the century, but also during the inter-war period. Furthermore, this work will contribute to the general understanding of the settlement of North Queensland; a part of Australia which is under-represented in the literature concerned with the historical geography of this country.¹¹

1.3 THEMES

This thesis will be concerned with the growth and development of a regional sugar production system, with particular attention to the following seven issues: the changing spatial organization of the system (i.e. location of mills, expansion of cropping, changing allocation of suppliers to the mills); system structure (i.e. production units); system regulation; the impact of government policies on the system; the influence of other individual decision-makers; the significance of the resource base; and the role of technological change. Most emphasis, however, will be given to the first five themes. Each theme will now be considered briefly.

The Changing Spatial Organization of the System

Sugar growing on the Lower Burdekin in the early 1880s was confined to small areas around five plantation mills on the northern side of the Burdekin River within an eight kilometre radius of Ayr. Over the next half century sugar-cane cultivation spread throughout the region, so that by 1930 the crop was grown in the Haughton River district, on the southern side of the Burdekin River encompassing an area between Stokes Range and Inkerman Siding and of course still around Ayr, although on a much wider scale than in the 1880s. This sugar-cane was grown for four mills - Pioneer and Kalamia, which had operated since the early 1880s and Inkerman and Invicta, which had been erected in the district after 1910.

¹¹ For historical geographies specifically on North Queensland see references in the bibliography to Birtles (1967), Frawley (1983) and Frawley (1987).

A detailed account of the above expansion of cane growing to different localities throughout the region and the changing allocation of suppliers to the various mills (i.e. evolution of mill catchment areas) will form an integral part of this study. Explanations of these developments will take into consideration a number of factors, including competition between millers, location of tramlines, the role of the Central Cane Prices Board and land openings throughout the region. Indeed, particular attention will be devoted to establishing the chronologies of Crown land openings and freehold estate subdivisions in order to show the relationship between the former and the spread of sugar growing and changes to the mills' catchment areas.

System Structure

Much of the recent literature on the evolution of sugar industries in various regions throughout the world has been concerned with changes in the structure of the production systems. A central theme to a lot of this work is the adjustments made to the production unit when cheap labour was no longer available.¹²

As noted above, this study will be particularly interested in the production units, the plantation and the central mills supplied by small farms, and how the former was eventually replaced by the latter in 1900s. It will be argued in this thesis that the transformation from one production system to another on the Lower Burdekin was inevitable, given the increasing difficulty in securing indentured workers, especially Melanesians, and the broader socio-political forces that were in operation at the time such as the White Australia policy, trade unionism and agrarianism which favoured small-scale farming or the yeoman settler.¹³ The timing of this transformation within a particular region such as the Lower Burdekin was dependent, however, upon various factors, including the entrepreneurial abilities of the district's planters and the availability of settlers willing to lease or purchase a planter's land holdings.

¹² For a selection of these studies see references in the bibliography to Adamson (1972), Guy (1984), Johnston (1972), Moynagh (1981), Richardson (1984), Schmitz (1979), Ward (1982) and Warman (1984).

¹³ For a discussion on the yeomanry ideal in Australia's development see J.M. Powell, Mirrors of the New World (Canberra: A.N.U. Press, 1978), pp. 70-83.

System Regulation

As mentioned earlier, a characteristic of the Lower Burdekin sugar industry by 1930 was its tightly regulated production system. It will be suggested that the development of this feature was likely to occur, given the emergence of the small cane farmers, for the millers needed tight control over their suppliers. This need arose because of the peculiar nature of sugar growing, for it is an industrial as well as an agricultural operation, as the ripe cane must be milled within a few hours of being cut to avoid a rapid deterioration in sugar content. In addition, the efficiency of milling under a given technology is largely a function of a mill's ability to obtain a regular flow of cane to match its capacity.¹⁴

Therefore, to meet the above requirements the Lower Burdekin millers, as early as the 1890s, introduced agreements which determined the mill a farmer supplied, the timing of the harvest, the variety of cane cultivated and the price reserved for their cane. The Lower Burdekin farmers, particularly after 1905, submitted themselves to such regulation because sugar-cane had emerged as the region's staple and they would and could not readily turn to alternative crops. Eventually, however, Local Cane Prices Boards were set up by the Queensland Government in 1915 to determine these agreements and protect the farmers' interest. Further regulation of the activities of the Lower Burdekin farmers occurred in the late 1920s, when restrictions were placed upon the area that they could cultivate, in order to avoid overproduction.

Regulation of the operations of the millers also occurred, especially after 1915. Details on this subject, however, will be provided in the next section, for it is concerned with government control over the industry's marketing.

The Impact of Governmental Policies

Governmental influence over the evolution of agricultural production systems has figured prominently as a theme in the historical geography of Australia. General surveys have touched on the subject at the

¹⁴ Ralph Shlomowitz, "The Search for Institutional Equilibrium in Queensland's Sugar Industry, 1884-1913", Australian Economic History Review, 19 (1979): 96.

continental level,¹⁵ while others have commented on the subject at the state-level; for example Frost has explored the governmental support given to agriculture in Victoria between 1880 and 1914, Lewis has discussed the part played by government in fostering agriculture in Queensland, Glynn has reviewed the role of the Western Australian Government in promoting agriculture in that state, Robinson has documented government influence on the growth of the wheat industry in New South Wales from 1851 to 1911 and Williams and Meinig have both explored the impact of governmental decisions on rural settlement and agriculture in South Australia.¹⁶ Many detailed regional studies have also added to our understanding of the topic; for instance there are the works by Camm and Waterson on the Darling Downs, Peel's history of rural settlement in the Port Phillip region before 1880, Perry's account of early settlement in New South Wales, Buxton's book on the Riverina, Langford-Smith's essays on the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area and Powell's study of Western Victoria, to mention some of the most important investigations.¹⁷

In this study, three aspects of government influence are treated at some length. The first is control over land access. Unlike studies on the wheat industry,¹⁸ the literature on sugar growing in Australia has tended to ignore the government's role in land disposal and its impact on the shaping of the industry in favour of concentrating on the industry's labour problems. Only Higman in his study of northern New South Wales and to a lesser extent Moore in his work on Mackay have assessed the

¹⁵ See references in the bibliography to Butlin (1956), Butlin et al. (1982), McMichael (1984), Reeves (1902), Roberts (1924), Williams (1967) and Williams (1975).

¹⁶ See references in the bibliography to Frost (1982), Glynn (1967, 1975), Lewis (1978), Meinig (1963), Robinson (1976) and Williams (1974).

¹⁷ See references in the bibliography to Buxton (1967), Camm (1971, 1976), Langford-Smith (1966, 1967), Peel (1974), Perry (1963), Powell (1970) and Waterson (1968).

¹⁸ See for example J. Andrews, "The emergence of the Wheat Belt in South-Eastern Australia to 1930", in Frontiers and Men: a volume in memory of Griffith Taylor, Ed. J. Andrews (Melbourne: Cheshire), pp. 5-65; Sean Glynn, Government Policy and Agricultural Development. A Study of the Role of Government in the Development of the Western Australian Wheatbelt 1900-1930 (Perth: Uni. of Western Australia Press, 1975), pp. 85-92; and M.E. Robinson, The New South Wales Wheat Frontier 1851-1911 Department of Human Geography Publication No. 10, Research School of Pacific Studies, A.N.U. (Canberra: A.N.U. Press, 1976), pp. 48-83._

Crown's part in land disposal and its impact on the evolution of sugar-cane growing at a regional level.¹⁹

Queensland's land legislation between 1868 and 1884 allowed large blocks of agricultural land (up to 5,120 acres in size) to be selected on the Lower Burdekin. Some of these blocks were secured by planters who established the district's sugar estates. Subsequent changes in government policy favoured the growth of a sugar industry based on small farms supplying central mills. However, at no time in the late nineteenth century did a Queensland Government intervene to force the subdivision of the Lower Burdekin sugar plantations or to repurchase the sugar estates with the intent of subdivision for closer settlement, as occurred in British Guiana.²⁰ The breaking up of the large plantation acreages occurred voluntarily. In contrast, the Queensland Government through the introduction of the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act of 1894 and closer settlement legislation of 1906-1917 made repurchases of large freehold pastoral holdings in southern Queensland for subdivision and closer settlement.²¹

From 1884 onwards the land legislation in Queensland ensured agricultural land was opened to selection on the Lower Burdekin in much smaller blocks, usually between 100 and 300 acres in size. This policy obviously encouraged the development of the region's sugar industry based on small farms. The Crown's attempts to promote this form of closer settlement on the Lower Burdekin was, however, retarded on occasions by lack of demand for the blocks and the unsuitability of some of the land for agriculture. Nevertheless, by 1915 most of the Crown land suited to agriculture had been disposed of to settlers. Moreover, from the early 1900s onwards subdivision of freehold estates contributed significantly to the amount of land made available to purchase on the Lower Burdekin. The Crown's influence over access to land on the Lower Burdekin, therefore, was less significant in the latter half of this study.

¹⁹ Higman, "Sugar Plantations and Yeoman Farming in New South Wales", pp. 701-705; Clive Moore, Kanaka (Port Moresby: Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies and University of Papua New Guinea Press, 1985), pp. 101-108.

²⁰ Alan Adamson, Sugar Without Slaves (New Haven: Yale Uni. Press, 1972), p. 99.

²¹ See J.C. Camm, "Land Settlement and the Development of Farming Under the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act of 1894 and Closer Settlement Acts of 1906-1917", Queensland Heritage, 1(1968): 25-31.

The second major sphere of government influence on sugar growing concerned the regulation of its labour supply. Before 1905 indentured Melanesians dominated the Queensland sugar industry's workforce.²² The Queensland Government, although not encouraging or assisting indentured alien workers to come to the colony (unlike the governments of other sugar-growing areas throughout the world)²³ did not initially oppose their recruitment in the 1860s. From the mid-1870s onwards, however, the Queensland authorities sought firstly to control their importation and then to end their employment in the colony's sugar industry after 1892.²⁴ Although the latter policy was reversed in 1892, its introduction combined with the low prices for sugar caused a contraction in the Lower Burdekin sugar industry in the mid-1880s.

The Queensland Government's policy towards Melanesian employment in the colony's sugar industry remained unaltered during the 1890s. Following the federation of the colonies in 1901, however, the Commonwealth enacted legislation restricting the immigration of aliens to Australia, and requiring most of the Melanesian community in Queensland to be repatriated to their home islands.²⁵ Such legislation forced the Lower Burdekin planters, who still relied heavily on indentured Melanesians and Japanese in 1900, to end plantation agriculture by 1906, for they were unwilling to operate using the more expensive 'white' workers, although encouraged to do so by Commonwealth incentives. Instead, the Lower Burdekin planters leased their lands to tenant farmers and turned their factories into proprietary central mills. Therefore, the Commonwealth's policy towards non-European workers in the Australian

²² See C.P.P., 3 (1912): 1021.

²³ The colonial governments of Natal, Fiji, British Guiana and Trinidad all encouraged and partly financed the schemes whereby sugar planters imported indentured workers, mainly Indians (see Alan H. Adamson, Sugar Without Slaves, pp. 44-46; B. Brereton, Race Relations in Colonial Trinidad 1870-1900 (Cambridge: Cambridge Uni. Press, 1979), pp. 176-181; Robert Huttenback, Racism and Empire (Ithaca: Cornell Uni. Press, 1976), pp. 52-58; and Michael Moynagh, Brown and White? A History of the Fiji Sugar Industry 1873-1973 (Canberra: A.N.U. Press, 1981), p. 21).

²⁴ For a review of the measures introduced between 1868 and 1884 to regulate the recruitment of Melanesians to Queensland and their employment in the colony see Moore, Kanaka, pp. 129-132.

²⁵ Details on the measures introduced to create a 'white' sugar industry in Australia are to be found in R. Norris, The Emergent Commonwealth (Melbourne: Melbourne Uni. Press, 1975), pp. 81-91.

sugar industry had a structural impact on the sugar production system on the Lower Burdekin, in addition to its socio-economic influence on the region. Furthermore, vigilance and discrimination against aliens working in the Queensland sugar industry ensured the essentially Anglo-Saxon nature of the Lower Burdekin sugar industry between 1915 and 1930.²⁶

The third major sphere of government influence on the sugar industry was related to market regulation. As early as 1870 Queensland's sugar growers were given preferential treatment in their domestic markets by the imposition of a £5 per ton tariff on imported sugar into the colony, although Shlomowitz has argued that this tariff was inoperative by the early 1880s.²⁷ Following federation in 1901, the Queensland sugar industry was given a protective tariff against sugar produced by non-Australian suppliers. This protection was extended further in 1915 when the Commonwealth, during war-time conditions, agreed to acquire Queensland's entire raw sugar crop, guaranteeing a set price to the state's millers. In addition, the Commonwealth took control of importing any sugar required to meet domestic needs and set the prices for refined sugar and products manufactured from sugar (e.g. jam). Agreements between the Commonwealth and Queensland Governments during the 1920s continued the prohibition of sugar imports and the maintenance of set prices on the Australian market.²⁸ The Commonwealth and Queensland Governments' willingness to provide such extensive protection for the state's sugar millers and farmers arose out of the perception that sugar was the only endeavour that would lead to 'white' settlement in northern

²⁶ For a review of the legislative measures introduced to exclude aliens from the Queensland sugar industry between 1910 and 1930 see Kay Saunders, "Indentured Labour in Queensland", in Indentured Labour in the British Empire, Ed. Kay Saunders (London: Croom Helm, 1984), pp. 240-245.

²⁷ Ross Fitzgerald, From the Dreaming to 1915 (Brisbane: Uni. of Queensland Press, 1982), p. 193; Ralph Shlomowitz, "Melanesian Labor and the Development of the Queensland Sugar Industry", Research in Economic History, 7 (1982): 338-339.

²⁸ For details on the marketing of Australian sugar in the 1910s and 1920s see Adrian Graves, "The State and the Development of the Queensland Cane Sugar Industry", 31 pp. paper presented at the Conference on Crisis and Change in the International Sugar Economy, 1914-1939, and the 1980s, Norwich, 1987.

Australia.²⁹ Consequently, the sugar industry was to be protected so that its farmers and millers could prosper, but within a regulated context to avoid overproduction.

Therefore, the Lower Burdekin sugar industry during its development between 1901 and 1930 was protected from the effects of cheap overseas imports of sugar and from 1915 onwards the district's millers were guaranteed set prices for their raw sugar by the Commonwealth. This protective umbrella, however, did not always lead to growth. It will be shown in this study that the below world parity prices paid by the Commonwealth for raw sugar in the late 1910s led to a period of stagnation in the Lower Burdekin sugar industry. Also, in the late 1920s the Lower Burdekin growers (along with their counterparts in other regions) were required to restrict production in order to ensure the maintenance of the "pool" price for raw sugar and to guarantee the Commonwealth's continued prohibition of overseas produced sugar imports. This limitation was particularly felt by the Haughton Sugar Co., attempting to increase the cane supply to the struggling Invicta Mill.

The Influence of Other Individual Decision-Makers

Although the broader national socio-political forces had an impact on the development of the Lower Burdekin sugar industry, they cannot explain the processes of change entirely. Regional spatial patterns can be partly understood by taking into account local environmental conditions, as well as such "parochial factors as personalities and peculiarities of individuals".³⁰ Indeed, as Heathcote and McCaskill claim, "the landscape influence of individual decision-makers has as yet received only limited attention".³¹

In this study a number of local decision-makers such as John Drysdale and various organizations (e.g. Australian Estates, N.A.P.C.,

²⁹ For a discussion of this issue see G.C. Bolton, A Thousand Miles Away. A History of North Queensland to 1920. (Canberra: A.N.U. Press, 1972), p. 309.

³⁰ Cathie May, Topsawyers: the Chinese in Cairns 1870 to 1920, Studies in North Queensland History, No. 6 (Townsville: History Dept., J.C.U., 1984), p. 1.

³¹ R.L. Heathcote and M. McCaskill, "Historical Geography in Australia and New Zealand", in Progress in Historical Geography, Ed. A. Baker (Newton Abbot, U.K.: David and Charles, 1972), p. 150.

A.N.Z.M. Co., I.F.G.A.) influenced the evolution of the Lower Burdekin sugar industry. Of all the local decision-makers, however, it will be argued that the most important was John Drysdale, the Scottish engineer who held the position of Managing Director of Drysdale Bros.' operations on the Lower Burdekin between 1886 and 1928 and General Manager of Australian Estates and Mortgage Co.'s Lower Burdekin estates between 1898 and 1914. Indeed, it was Drysdale who is accredited with developing the principle of spear irrigation that allowed irrigation to become widespread on the Lower Burdekin, decided upon when and where to construct tramlines, when to upgrade the capacities of the mills and arranged financial backing for many of the region's farmers.

The Significance of the Resource Base

Any assessment of the development of a rural agricultural system must take into account the resource base, especially soils and climate. Although not a major concern of this thesis, some discussion, however, will be concerned with identifying the physical features which hindered the subsequent expansion of sugar growing in the region before 1930. In particular it will be shown that the Lower Burdekin suffered from low and erratic yearly rainfall, which forced the planters and farmers to resort to irrigation. The development of this feature will receive special attention throughout this study, for its development was critical to the survival and expansion of the Lower Burdekin sugar industry.

The Role of Technological Change

The importance of technological change in influencing the development of sugar industries has been recognized in a number of studies.³² Although not a major theme in this study, reference will be made to the impact advances in milling technology and cultivation techniques had on the evolution of the Lower Burdekin sugar industry. In particular, it will be noted that the Lower Burdekin planters-cum-millers came under increasing pressure from the early 1890s onwards to

³² See for example Adamson, Sugar Without Slaves, pp. 171-173, 185-192; R.W. Beachey, The British West Indies Sugar Industry in the Late Nineteenth Century (Oxford: Blackwell, 1957), pp. 61-80; Peter Richardson, "The Natal Sugar Industry in the Nineteenth Century", in Crisis and Change in the International Sugar Economy 1860-1914, Eds. W. Albert and A. Graves (Norwich: I.S.C. Press, 1984), p. 246; and Mark Schmitz, "The Transformation of the Southern Cane Sugar Sector, 1860-1930", Agricultural History, 53 (1979): 274-277.

upgrade their mills' machinery and capacities to handle the larger crops with greater efficiency. For the Lower Burdekin farmers, it was the loss of their cheap Melanesian workers which forced them to adopt machinery such as tractors and the 'drop' planter, in order to save the expense associated with employing the more expensive European labourers. Also, the introduction in 1916 of the system which paid growers according to the c.c.s. of their cane, instead of the weight of cane delivered to the mills, encouraged the district's farmers to utilize more advanced cultivation techniques, including manures and irrigation, to ensure better yields.

1.4 A REGIONAL STUDY ... THE PRECEDENTS AND REASONS

As mentioned earlier, the Lower Burdekin region is at a comparatively small scale in terms of Queensland or Australia. However, the use of a small region or local area as the unit of study is a legitimate geographical approach. Indeed, in Great Britain recently there has been a spate of locality studies,³³ sparked off by the work of Massey, who identified the spatial division of labour as a central concept for analysis where different localities articulate specific local circumstances in the capitalist process.³⁴ In Australia, some important local area studies to list but a few include Birtles' study of the Atherton-Evelyn region in North Queensland, Coward's article on the changes in the land tenure in the Cooma district, Williams' research into the Pinaroo area in South Australia, Staples' study on the Harvey district north of Bunbury in Western Australia, Harris' review of the impact of European settlement on the hundred of Mantung in South Australia and Grant's assessment of the transborder differences in rural settlement between the Hundred of Mingbool, South Australia and the Parish of Mumbarrar, Victoria.³⁵

The importance of local area studies has been argued by a number of scholars. Buxton has noted that limiting the field of study geographically has the advantage of permitting deeper analysis. If

³³ R.J. Bennett and J.B. Thornes, "Geography in the United Kingdom 1984-1988", The Geographical Journal, 154, 1 (1988): 32.

³⁴ D. Massey, Spatial Divisions of Labour (London: Macmillan, 1984).

³⁵ See references in the bibliography to Birtles (1967), Coward (1970), Grant (1972), Harris (1970), Staples (1951) and Williams (1972).

parochialism was avoided, the findings from such detailed study could suggest implications for historians writing in the broader context.³⁶ Jeans has proposed that while the often state-oriented studies operate at the meso-scale, the fuller picture can only be obtained by local studies which can illuminate the broad patterns now largely demonstrated.³⁷ Williams has stated that local area studies are the "essential building stones in the erection of bigger structures"³⁸ while Meinig argues that history and geography must be written "not from the top down, but from the bottom up", and therefore local studies are "not only respectable, [they are] vital to sound" studies at any level.³⁹ Similarly, Bolton has noted that regional histories can amplify our understanding of the major themes and questions of Australian history. As such the study of a region may be seen not simply as worthwhile for its own sake but also as part of the dynamic through which our concepts of Australian society are tested and refined. Regional studies, therefore, can show how events and policies of national importance were reflected at the local level.⁴⁰

It is anticipated that this study will fulfil many of the above functions associated with local area studies. The selection of a small area for detailed study has allowed the examination of a number of issues which are treated too briefly in the writings of general historians—questions concerning the timing of the transformation from one production unit to another, development of catchment areas to the sugar mills, the role of individuals in determining geographic change and the role of the planters-cum-millers in influencing the regulation of the system and supporting their small suppliers. Also, this study will show how broader influences, such as the White Australia policy and

³⁶ G.L. Buxton, The Riverina, 1861-91. An Australian Regional Study (Melbourne: Melbourne Uni. Press, 1967), p. 3.

³⁷ D. Jeans, "Historical Geography", Australian Geographical Studies, 26 (1988): 107.

³⁸ Michael Williams, "Places, Periods, and Themes: A Review and Prospect of Australian Historical Geography", The Australian Geographer, 11, 3 (1970): 408.

³⁹ D.W. Meinig, On the Margins of the Good Earth (London: Association of American Geographers, 1963), p. 7 (Quoting James Malin, "On the Nature of Local History", Wisconsin Magazine of History (Summer, 1957), 227-30).

⁴⁰ G. Bolton, "Regional History in Australia" in Historical Disciplines and Cultures in Australia, Ed. John Moses (Brisbane: Uni. of Queensland Press, 1979), pp. 219-220.

agrarianism which favoured small-scale farming were reflected at the "grass roots" or local level of the Lower Burdekin.

The Lower Burdekin was chosen for study for a variety of reasons. Firstly, the area was familiar to the candidate, who had been born and raised in the district. Accordingly, an extensive network of contacts was already in existence. Secondly, preliminary field investigations indicated there were sufficient surviving records to ensure what was planned could be successfully completed. Thirdly, the Lower Burdekin had attracted little attention from researchers, despite an abundance of mill histories and local sugar histories (see Table 1.1). Indeed, of the work done on the Lower Burdekin, Peake's local history is sketchy and anecdotal, Connolly's book is essentially a biography of John Drysdale and pays little attention to the development of other sugar mills in the district while the three booklets that each account for history of one of the district's sugar mills and O'Brien's articles are brief publications which contain little substantive material. Accordingly, there was a need to undertake a scholarly and detailed study of sugar growing on the Lower Burdekin. In fact, there is a need to undertake scholarly studies on the evolution of the sugar industry in a number of Queensland regions. Many of the publications in Table 1.1 are either glossy publications produced to celebrate some milestone in a sugar mill's history, regional histories containing a brief section on the sugar industry or general sugar histories covering the years from when sugar-cane was first grown in a district until the year they were written. As such they are useful in obtaining reasonably reliable background information, as are the survey works on the history of the Queensland sugar history,⁴¹ but these studies do not contain detailed discussions or interpretations of the chronologies of events.

Lastly, the surviving historical records relating to the Lower Burdekin sugar industry before 1930, such as registers of growers for some of the sugar mills and detailed correspondence that provided an insight into the decisions made by the government and important individuals (e.g. John Drysdale), in conjunction with regional cadastral data obtained from archival sources, rate books and the Townsville Titles

⁴¹ For a selection of general survey works on the Queensland sugar industry see references in the bibliography to Bell (1956), Easterby (1932), Fitzgerald (1944), Moore (1974), O'Brien (1951a, b) and Wood (1965).

Table 1.1. Secondary Sources on the History of the Queensland Sugar Industry, 1860-1930, Classified by to Region (see bibliography for complete reference)

Region	Local History	Mill History
1. Cook/Mossman	*+ Kerr (1979)	*Kerr (1979)
2. Cairns	Collinson (1939: 76-77, 123-129); Collinson (1942: passim); Collinson (1945); *Jones (1976: 150-174, 355-378, 425-431)	
3. Mourilyan/ Johnstone R.	*Jones (1973: 102-170, 247-269, 303-312); Fitzgerald (1944: 70- 72); Collinson (1953: 811-812)	Moore (1975, 1977)
4. Lower Herbert	+ O'Brien (1951e)	
5. Lower Burdekin	Peake (1951); *Connolly (1964) +O'Brien (1952b, c)	Anon (1958); Anon (1984); Robertson (1984)
6. Mackay	*Cone (1963); *Nilsson (1963); **Nilsson (1964); **Moore (1974); *Kerr (1980); **Moore (1981); **Manning (1983); *O'Brien (1951d)	Landells (1937); Moore (1977); Moore (1980); Atherton (1980); *Manning (1983)
7. Rockhampton	*McDonald (1981: 63, 67, 208-9)	
8. Bundaberg	*Dignan (1964: 71-108); *Nolan (1978); **Kerr (1983), O'Brien (1951f), O'Brien (1952a)	Anon (1961); *Kerr (1983)
9. Maryborough	Maryborough, Wide Bay and Burnett Historical Society (1976: passim); **Kerr (1951c) *O'Brien (1951c)	
10. Gympie/Maroochy	*Gaylard (1967: 42-82)	
11. Brisbane/Ipswich		
12. Albert/Logan/ Nerang	*Longhurst (1978: 12-13)	Langford and Thomis (1979)

* Acknowledgement of sources (i.e. footnotes or references)

+ The study is entirely about the sugar industry.

Office, made such a regional geographical approach particularly appropriate. Indeed, the use of registers of mill growers and the plotting of farmer location on reconstructed cadastral maps of the Lower Burdekin prior to 1930 in an effort to explain the spatial evolution the district's sugar industry distinguishes this thesis from all previous research into the Queensland sugar industry.

1.5 THESIS ORGANIZATION

Horton recently has suggested that the research into historical geography could be broadly classified into the studies of the past, of change through time and of the past in the present.⁴² Such a classification is of course a simplification, yet for the purposes of this thesis definitions of Horton's classes will be provided below. More detailed methodological statements are covered elsewhere in the literature.⁴³

Studies of the past have mainly utilized the technique of the cross-section, which describes and analyses a past landscape at a particular time without substantive reference to the periods preceding or succeeding that of immediate interest. Where information is available one logical development of the static cross section is the presentation of some chronological sequence of cross sections, which sometimes contain linking narrative between cross sections.⁴⁴

The second principal concern of the historical geographer is to focus on change. To find out how things came to be where they are, or were, at a particular time, it is necessary to study the work of the agents generating change, development or movement; in a word to follow a genetic approach. Work focusing on geographical change includes

⁴² W. Horton, Historical Analysis in Geography (London: Longman, 1984), p. 28.

⁴³ See references in the bibliography to Newcomb (1969), Williams (1970), Prince (1971), Heathcote and McCaskill (1972) and Jeans (1988).

⁴⁴ Horton, Historical Analysis in Geography, pp. 30-31.

sequential occupant, evolutionary succession, episodic changes, frontier and morphogenesis of cultural landscape studies.⁴⁵

An approach which can be distinguished from the basic two already noted relates to the assertion that many insights into the character of past landscapes are offered by the present landscape. This retrogressive method permits the reconstruction of the past from the present by means of proceeding from the relatively well known present to the less known past. This approach also includes studying relevant features in the contemporary landscape without any direct concern for the relevant former landscape.

From the outset it was decided not to study the historical development of the Lower Burdekin sugar industry by utilizing the retrogressive method. Such an approach, which is mainly used by French geographers, has been criticized because the readers often become cut off completely from the thread of logical argumentation and confused about the entire exercise as the author delves backward through time.⁴⁶ It was also decided not to consider the topic by using a series of cross sections at a particular time. This approach's major shortcoming is that the series of static pictures arranged chronologically reflect too inadequately the extent of changes taking place on the processes or mechanizations producing the change. Also, the selection of dates to undertake the reconstructions all too often depend on the availability of data, and not necessarily when critical change was taking place.

This study, therefore, is concerned with geographical change through time. The following two approaches to the subject were considered: the vertical technique which would have seen chapters arranged by topics such as Planters and Plantations, Mills and Millers, and Farms and Farmers; or chronologically. It was decided to examine the issue chronologically as far as possible, to show how the pattern developed as a whole. Accordingly, the material has been arranged into exclusive periods - approximately a decade in length - divided by marker dates that

⁴⁵ Hugh Prince, "Real, imagined and abstract worlds of the past", in Progress in Geography. Eds. C. Board et al. (London: Edward Arnold, 1971), pp. 12-21.

⁴⁶ Robert Newcomb, "Twelve Working Approaches to Historical Geography", Yearbook, Association of Pacific Coast Geographers, 31 (1969): 32.

correspond to significant political or local events that caused change in the spatial patterns of the production of sugar. The chapters that emerge look more like a historical narrative or economic history. However, the writer's purpose has been to introduce into the historical studies of the sugar industry the spatial dimension, which has all too often been lacking.

As most readers will be unfamiliar with the history of the Lower Burdekin, it is necessary at this stage to provide some explanation of the time span of this work as well as its general structure. Since the thesis is concerned with spatial changes in the Lower Burdekin sugar industry, 1881 would appear a logical starting point, for that was the year when large-scale sugar cultivation commenced in the region. The Lower Burdekin, however, had already been settled for twenty years. Accordingly, for completeness, this study begins in 1860 and suggests reasons why the Lower Burdekin was overlooked for two decades as a locality in which to cultivate sugar-cane. The study then documents the changes in the Lower Burdekin sugar industry until 1930. The selection of 1930 as the year to conclude the study was considered appropriate for three reasons. Firstly, 1930 marked the introduction of the Peak Year Scheme, a plan that limited the individual sugar output of the mills in Queensland by restricting the area on which a farmer could cultivate cane. Secondly, up until 1930 the Lower Burdekin sugar industry could be still characterized as labour intensive. Finishing the study in 1930, therefore, ended it before the Lower Burdekin sugar industry was subjected to extensive mechanization. Thirdly, 1930 ended the study before there was large-scale penetration of Italians into sugar-growing on the Lower Burdekin. The majority of the sugar growers on the Lower Burdekin in 1930, as in the 1880s, were Anglo-Saxon. In contrast, southern European penetration of other northern sugar growing regions in the 1920s had already changed the racial composition of the state's northern sugar farmers.

Preceding the discussion on the evolution of the Lower Burdekin sugar industry are two thematic chapters. The first reviews the status of the records concerning the history of the Lower Burdekin sugar industry and describes the methods used in reconstructing its past geography, while the second assesses the physical environment on the Lower Burdekin. Particular attention is focused on the region's geomorphology,

vegetation and climate. The latter feature of the region's geography was to have a particular bearing on the development of the sugar industry.

Chapter Four covers from 1860 - the year pastoral runs were first established on the Lower Burdekin - until 1876. Although pastoralism was the dominant activity throughout the region during these years, some interest was shown in the region's sugar-growing potential. Also, after 1868, sections of the pastoral runs were resumed and opened to selection as smaller blocks. However, little notice was taken of the available land on the Lower Burdekin. Reasons for this unwillingness to settle in the Lower Burdekin region will be advanced.

The fifth chapter starts in 1877, the year in which there began an upsurge in closer settlement on the Lower Burdekin that continued until the late 1880s. Some of the land secured during these years was obtained by planters, who established the sugar industry on the Lower Burdekin. The successful foundation of sugar-growing in the region was marred, however, by the substantial drop in world sugar prices in 1884 and the introduction of anti-Melanesian legislation in 1885. Chapter 5 also introduces John Drysdale, the Scottish engineer who was to dominate the district's sugar industry for the next forty years.

Chapter 6 commences in 1892 - the year the Queensland Government re-allowed the recruitment of Melanesians to the colony - and explores the expansion in sugar growing on the Lower Burdekin in the 1890s. This expansion was related to the upsurge in the number of small farmers cultivating sugar-cane and an increase in the acreage under sugar-cane on the plantations. The unsuccessful attempts to erect a farmers' co-operative mill in the district and the growing influence of John Drysdale are also detailed.

The seventh chapter begins in 1902, the year following the Commonwealth's decision to prohibit the recruitment of Melanesians to Australia after 1904 and the introduction of legislation which provided farmers with a bounty on sugar grown by 'white' labourers. It reviews the extensive spatial and structural changes that occurred in the Lower Burdekin sugar industry in the 1900s following the introduction of this legislation. The discussion concentrates on the demise of the plantations and the parallel expansion of sugar growing to new localities within the region. In addition, problems associated with the use of European

labourers and the continued movement to erect a farmers' co-operative mill are examined.

Chapter Eight begins in 1913, the year the Commonwealth abolished its bounty on sugar grown by 'white' labour and returned its control over the industry to the Queensland Government. The year 1913 was also significant locally, due to the expansion of sugar growing to the southern side of the Burdekin River and around the Haughton River. Details of this expansion form the focus of this chapter. John Drysdale's influence is also again explored as he continued to dominate the region's sugar industry, although less successfully than in previous decades because of the introduction of the Central Cane Prices Board, a Queensland Government sponsored organization which assumed the previous role of the miller in deciding matters such as prices received for cane and farm assignments. Other topics examined include the successful transport and re-erection of Invicta Mill on the Lower Burdekin, farmer hardship due to droughts and industrial disputes and the establishment of the Inkerman Irrigation Scheme.

The ninth chapter starts in 1921, the year Invicta Mill - a farmer's factory erected at Giru - started crushing. The chapter reviews how the operation of this new mill influenced the cane supply to the region's other mills. Consideration is also given to the problem of overproduction in the district, the performance of the Lower Burdekin small farmers and the declining influence of John Drysdale.

The tenth and concluding chapter contains a summary of the changes to the spatial organization and system structure of the Lower Burdekin sugar industry and particulars on the growth of regulatory controls over the system. Details are provided to show how government policies, local influential decision-makers, the resource base and technological change all influenced the evolution of the Lower Burdekin sugar industry. It is concluded that the special contributions of this investigation are twofold. First, the study has tried to integrate the forces of social change occurring in Queensland and Australia with those specific local circumstances to show how they in combination shaped the evolution of a regional sugar production system. Second, it has provided details on some of the issues treated too briefly in the general histories, such as the development of mill catchment areas and the role of the

planters-cum-millers in influencing the regulation of the production system and supporting their small suppliers.

The last point that needs to be made about the organization of this thesis is that Chapters Five to Nine are each constructed in a similar fashion. After a short introductory paragraph there is a review of the developments in the Queensland sugar industry. This discussion provides the economic and political background for the years under review. The third part of the chapter examines the land openings on the Lower Burdekin. Each of these sections is especially important, for the timing of some of the land openings on the Lower Burdekin had a crucial bearing on the development of sugar growing within the region until 1920. A series of sections then specifically document the changes in the Lower Burdekin sugar industry during the period under review. The significance of the main points in each chapter is then highlighted in a concluding section.

1.6 CONCLUSIONS

Viewed in a wider perspective, this study will contribute to the general understanding of how rural production systems developed in Queensland. More specifically, this thesis will add to the historiography on the Queensland sugar industry by providing an analysis of the industry's development on the Lower Burdekin between 1880 and 1930. Unlike other Queensland sugar-growing regions, the Lower Burdekin has been the subject of little inquiry. In addition, this work breaks new ground in historical studies on the Queensland sugar industry, by the use of detailed cadastral information, lists of mill suppliers and company records to recreate the regional evolution of sugar growing. It attempts to place sugar studies on a firm geographical basis, particularly stressing the need for an understanding of the processes of land ownership, settlement and subdivision before the evolution of a region's or indeed a country's sugar industry can be fully appreciated.

Although this study is localized in space it has a wider relevance for the study of its time, for the changes that occurred to the sugar industry on the Lower Burdekin were not an isolated, or unique occurrence. Throughout other Queensland sugar growing regions, and in several sugar growing areas overseas, especially Fiji, southern U.S.A. and Trinidad, similar processes of change were in operation. Also, even

though this study is localized in time, it has wider relevance for the study of this particular place, for the patterns of sugar production established in this time-span set a framework which endures on the Lower Burdekin today. Thus, despite the narrow focus of this study there are as Meinig states, broader implications, both "generic and genetic".⁴⁷

⁴⁷ D.W. Meinig, On the Margins of the Good Earth, p. 3.

CHAPTER 2
RECONSTRUCTING THE PAST

... time is always time,
And place is always and only place.
And what is actual is actual for one time
And only for one place.
T.S. Elliot, Ash Wednesday

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The task of reconstructing the historical geography of the sugar industry on the Lower Burdekin between 1880 and 1930 required:

- (a) an appreciation of the surviving historical records relating to the topic;
- (b) the development of appropriate methodologies to extract the necessary geographical information from those surviving historical records; and
- (c) the compilation of appropriate diagrams and maps to convey the geographical information effectively.

Each of the above aspects will now be examined in greater depth.

2.2 SOURCES

The availability of relevant material from a small geographical area is very much a matter of chance, especially in a region such as North Queensland that is prone to floods, cyclones and destructive insects.¹ This is certainly the case on the Lower Burdekin where, as will be seen in the following discussion, there has been a substantial loss of records concerned with the region's history before 1930.

Of considerable importance for this thesis were the surviving records of the sugar mills that operated in the region after 1882. The four Lower Burdekin sugar mills which were established in this study period and still operate today - Pioneer, Kalamia, Inkerman and Invicta - have

¹ May, Topsawyers, p. 3.

preserved between them a substantial number of their early records.

By far the largest and most comprehensive collection of documents covers the workings of Pioneer Mill and plantation. Located at James Cook University, these records which date from 1884, include letterbooks, boxes of correspondence and financial records, account books and other miscellaneous documents. Further records consisting of registers of growers for Pioneer Mill and annual balance sheets were found at the mill.

Records on Kalamia Mill and plantation have also survived, although their quantity is not as great as that which exists for Pioneer Mill. Indeed, little information could be found on the operations at Kalamia during the 1880s, except for what appeared in the newspapers. However, from the mid-1890s onwards, there exists a variety of documents about Kalamia, for the mill and plantation were taken over by Australian Estates, a southern based company which required its mill managers to report weekly to Head Office in Melbourne. These letters, annual mill reports and telegrams are part of Australian Estates records, located in Melbourne and Canberra. Registers of growers, uncatalogued letters and miscellaneous financial records found at Kalamia Mill and two private letterbooks of Charles Young, the founder of Kalamia, were also consulted.

The two mills built on the Lower Burdekin after 1910 - Inkerman and Invicta - are lacking in great quantities of records that cover the years before 1930. After an extensive search at Inkerman Mill, all that could be located were lists of growers who supplied the mill. Nothing of the earliest correspondence and financial records could be found. Nevertheless, it was possible to obtain some picture of operations at Inkerman through the reading of Pioneer Sugar Mill's records at James Cook University, as Drysdale Bros. also owned Inkerman Mill. Details on Invicta Mill's performance on the Lower Burdekin before 1930 were found in a small collection of documents consisting of annual reports, some correspondence, and minutes of the Board of Directors. However, unlike the other three mills, registers of growers supplying Invicta Mill in the 1920s could not be located.

Records of Drynie and Airdmillan - the two Lower Burdekin mills that crushed only during the 1880s - could not be found. Details on the

operations of these two mills were obtained from contemporary newspapers. Similarly, the records of Seaforth Mill which crushed between 1884 and 1898, could not be located. There were, however, occasional mentions of this mill in the newspapers and in the Australian Estates records, for Seaforth came under the control of Australian Estates in 1894.

Other original material relating to the historical evolution of the district's industry was yielded by the Queensland State Archives and official government publications. The latter were an invaluable source for they contained statistical data and the transcripts of evidence of the various Royal Commissions into the sugar industry. Manuscript collections at the John Oxley Library (e.g. McIlwraith, Gray, Philip MSS) provided some details on leading figures involved in the Lower Burdekin sugar industry.

Newspapers are important primary sources for historians and historical geographers. The Lower Burdekin, however, did not gain a local newspaper, the Lower Burdekin Agriculturist (later the Ayr Chronicle), until 1897. As such it was necessary to rely on the Townsville, Bowen and Brisbane newspapers to obtain reports on what was happening in the district during the 1880s and 1890s. It is assumed that all the surviving copies of the Lower Burdekin Agriculturist and Ayr Chronicle were destroyed when Cyclone Leonta totally destroyed Ayr in 1903.² From 1903 to 1944, the Lower Burdekin's newspaper was the Delta Advocate. Only isolated copies of this newspaper survive before 1930. According to Connolly the newspaper's own copies before 1944 were deliberately burnt³ and the State Library in Brisbane only holds the Delta Advocate from 1937 onwards. Accordingly, it was again necessary to rely on the surviving Townsville and Bowen newspapers to obtain reports on what was happening on the Lower Burdekin. Fortunately, events on the Lower Burdekin must have been considered newsworthy, for regular reports about the district appear in both the Townsville and Bowen newspapers. As such it was possible to obtain a continuous record of life on the Lower Burdekin, although the usage of Townsville and Bowen newspapers did not compensate for the loss of the very detailed local

² For descriptions of the aftermath of this event see N.Q.H., 14 March 1903, pp. 38-39; and N.Q.H., 21 March 1903, pp. 37-38.

³ Roy Connolly, John Drysdale and the Burdekin (Sydney: Ure Smith Pty. Ltd., 1964), p. 40.

knowledge which would have been available if the Delta Advocate had survived.

The Lower Burdekin's local government records have also fared poorly over the decades since the Ayr Divisional Board was formed in 1888. With the exception of the rate books (which were used extensively in this thesis) all the Ayr Divisional Board's (later the Ayr Shire Council) correspondence, financial records, and minutes of council meetings before 1930 could not be located. It is reasonable to assume that the majority of these local government records were destroyed when Cyclone Leonta wrecked the Ayr Shire Council office in 1903 and when the new council office suffered a fire in 1919.

The majority of the surviving material consulted were official government documents or mill records. The lack of source material left by the men and women who were the Lower Burdekin's sugar-cane farmers is to be regretted. As early as 1919 it was observed by one witness before the Piddington Royal Commission that the Lower Burdekin farmers kept few records.⁴ Attempts to gather information on the development of the district's sugar industry from a farmer viewpoint through oral interviews proved unsuccessful. It was soon discovered that the majority of the district's farmers before 1930 had left the district or were deceased. Also, those older Lower Burdekin residents, who did remember the latter part of the study period had, as May aptly writes, "an indistinct impression of figures, dates and the relation in which one event stood to another".⁵ Consequently, older residents were relied upon mainly for their impressions and personal reminiscences, rather than for factual information, although in some cases their knowledge of the location of farmers in the district and the succession in farm ownership was invaluable. However, in all cases, information obtained from oral interviews was cross-checked with other sources.

Finally, an extensive search of contemporary books written before 1930 by visitors to or residents of North Queensland revealed almost no mention of the Lower Burdekin. In contrast, Townsville and Mackay, which were more accessible, figure prominently in such publications.

⁴ Ev. G.W. Julian, in A.B. Piddington et al., "Evidence of the Royal Commission into the Sugar Industry, 1920", p. 368.

⁵ May, Topsawyers, p. 4.

Accordingly, contemporary eye witness accounts and impressions of the Lower Burdekin's sugar industry are absent.

2.3 THE GEOGRAPHIC DATA BASE

2.3.1 Introduction

Initial analysis of the records relating to the history of the Lower Burdekin sugar industry revealed that sugar-cane was first grown in the district on plantations established in the 1880s. These plantations existed until the early 1900s. In addition, small farmers began to grow cane, although their numbers were not large until the late 1900s. The lists of these farmers who supplied the various mills in the districts are found in registers of growers or in letterbooks. However, in most cases there was no mention of where the farmers were situated in the district. Thus, to establish the location of the plantations and small farmers within the region, it was necessary to reconstruct the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century cadastral boundaries of the Lower Burdekin. This reconstruction also entailed establishing land ownership. Once this was achieved it was possible to determine the location of the plantations and allowed for the matching of names of growers for a mill with a particular block of land. The steps involved in reconstructing the cadastral boundaries and land ownership of a region between fifty and a hundred years ago will now be examined in greater detail.

2.3.2 The Land Opening Processes

Fundamental to the spatial structure of a region is the individual landholding, the cadaster. Hence any explanation of the spatial structure of an agricultural industry necessarily involves the explanation of the nature and origin of the individual landholding.⁶ To begin the explanation of how the Lower Burdekin landholdings evolved required initially obtaining some understanding of the process by which Crown land was opened to selection, but more importantly what happened to the blocks after they were secured from the Crown. A simplified schema of this process is shown in Figure 2.1.

⁶ Higman, "Sugar Plantations and Yeoman Farming in New South Wales", p. 697.

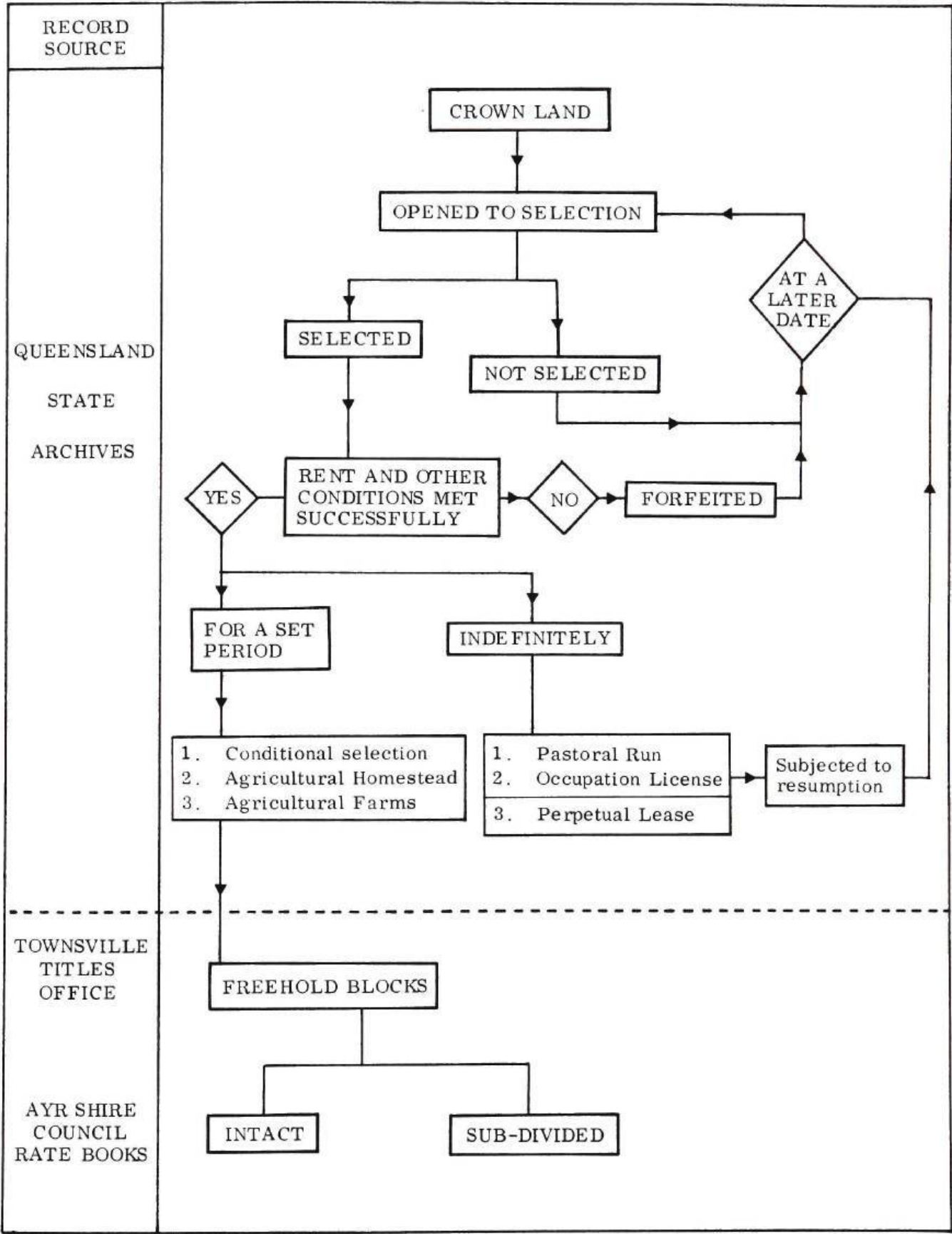


Figure 2.1. Simplified schema of Crown land disposal on the Lower Burdekin, 1868-1930.

Initially, in the early 1860s Crown land on the Lower Burdekin was opened to selection as pastoral runs several square miles in size. Later, especially in the 1900s and 1910s, the majority of the Crown land that was made available for occupation in the district was usually between one and three hundred acres in size.

In the case of pastoral runs, the occupier paid rent on a lease over varying lengths of time. Eventually, during the 1870s and 1880s, land was resumed from the pastoral runs for the purposes of subdivision and closer settlement and the pastoral runs disappeared on the Lower Burdekin - their remnants becoming occupation licenses. Rents continued to be paid on these occupation licenses - they could not be made freehold. A category of land holding, called the perpetual lease, introduced in the 1900s, enabled selectors to secure smaller blocks of Crown land and pay rent on these blocks for an indefinite period of time, without the land being made freehold or subjected to resumptions.

Throughout this study, land resumed from the pastoral runs, Crown reserves, occupation licenses or vacant Crown land, was opened to selection under a variety of terms and conditions (e.g. agricultural farms, conditional selections). The land successfully selected usually required the purchaser or bailiff to occupy and pay rent on the block for a set period of time. After these conditions were met, the blocks could be made freehold. Blocks not selected or blocks forfeited due to failure to meet the prescribed government conditions were usually offered for selection at a later date.

Before the blocks became freehold, details on their owners were found at the Queensland State Archives. Once freehold, blocks continued on until 1930 either intact (on the Lower Burdekin very rare), having the same or a succession of different owners, or were subdivided and re-subdivided into a variety of smaller blocks. Information of subdivision and change in ownership after subdivision was obtained at the Townsville Titles Office and from the Ayr Shire Council rate books.

This process appears relatively straightforward, but problems did arise in reconstructing the subdivisions and land ownership. For instance, not all the land records have survived, so gaps do appear in the archival documents, blocks forfeited and re-opened at a later date sometimes changed numbers, and leases on blocks were often not recorded at the

Townsville Titles Office or in the rate books. In addition, usually blocks were only recorded at the Townsville Titles Office as changing owners when the purchaser paid the original owner the full purchase price. As such, when some large blocks were subdivided on the basis of the purchaser paying a deposit for a portion of the block followed by yearly instalments until the purchasing price was met, the change in land ownership was not recorded until some years later at the Townsville Titles Office. However, the purchasers of the blocks were occupying the land, for they were recorded in the rate books as paying rates and often appear in the register of sugar growers for a particular mill.

Information on land ownership, obtained from the archives, Townsville Titles Office, and the rate books was entered into a standardized sheet (see Appendix 1). These sheets, in conjunction with contemporary maps, then provided the basis for locating the farmers and reconstructing the cadastral boundaries of the region.

2.3.3 Locating the Farmers

Once land ownership was established throughout the study period, details on the location of sugar growers could be plotted with a degree of accuracy. Initially the 1880s was a decade when sugar was grown on a limited number of plantations and by a few small farmers. Locating these earliest sugar growers within the region was easily undertaken after consulting archival records. From the late 1890s onwards, however, sugar cane was grown increasingly on small farms. To explore this spatial evolution in the location of these growers, two techniques were employed. Firstly, the Lower Burdekin region was broken into a number of localities (see Figure 2.2). These localities approximate their present day names within the region and were delineated by cadastral boundaries. Farmers were assigned a locality and tables showing changes in the number of farmers at a locality over a given time-span are presented throughout the thesis. Secondly, to obtain a better visual appreciation of these changes and some idea of the distances to tramlines and the mills, maps showing the location of the farmers at selected dates are also provided throughout the thesis.

Assignment of a farmer to a specific locality within the region was achieved after reference to a number of sources (see Table 2.1). Particularly useful for most periods was the information contained in the

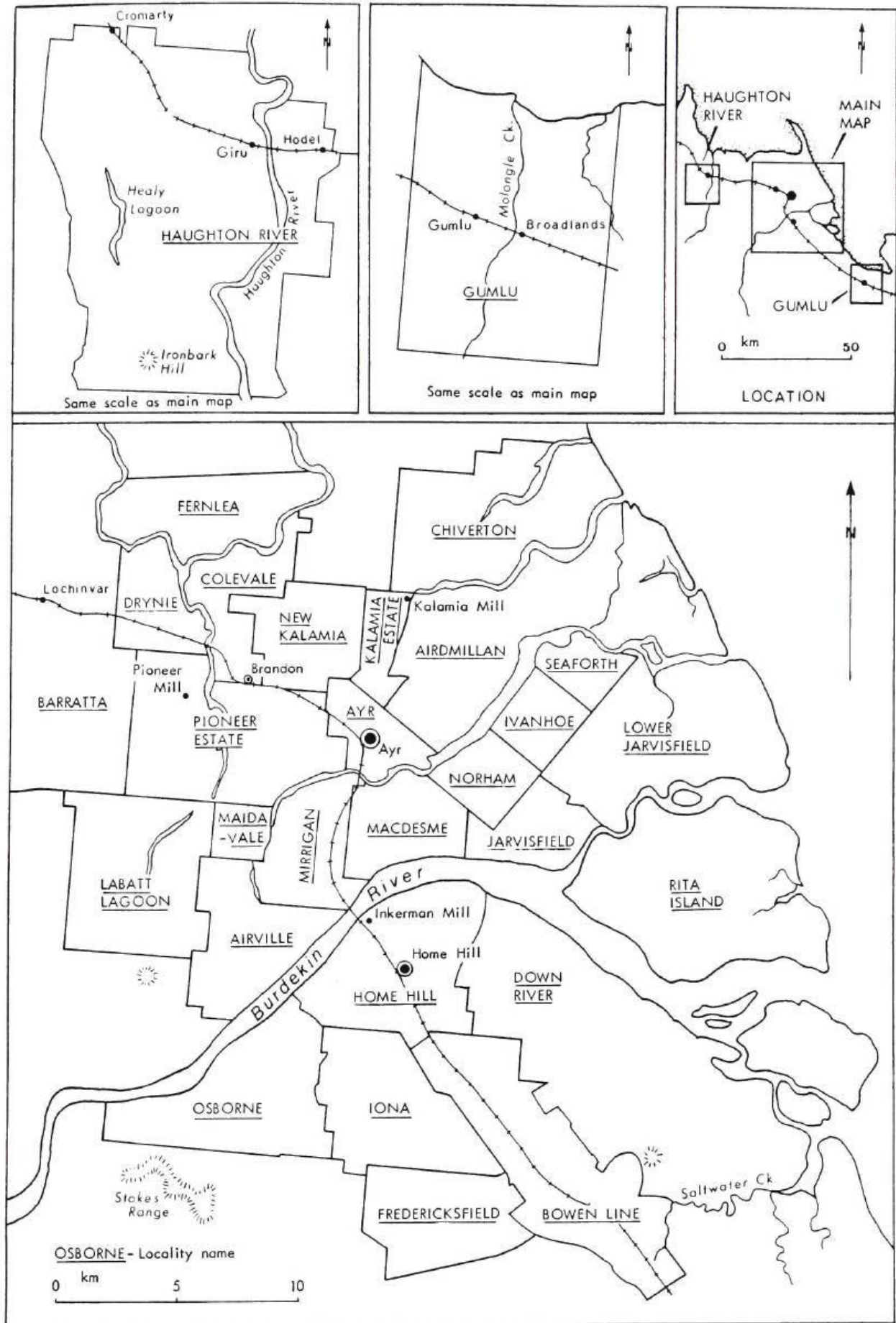


Figure 2.2 Localities within the Lower Burdekin Region

Table 2.1. Sources used to locate the Lower Burdekin Plantations and Cane Farmers, 1880-1930

Period	Reference Aid	Comments
1880-1891	Q.S.A.; T.T.O.; <u>Pugh's Almanac.</u>	
1892-1901	Q.S.A.; T.T.O.; Q.E.R.; A.S.C.; Rate Books, 1892-1894; K.M.A., Manager's Instructions and Memorandum Book, pp. 5-7 (listed location of Kalamia's growers, 1900-1901).	Chinese names presented difficulties; plantation owners did not record leases to tenants in great detail.
1902-1912	T.T.O.; Q.E.R.; Q.S.A.; A.S.C., Rate Books 1906-1912; Map of Pioneer Estate, c. 1906; J.C.U., PMR/LB/6; N.Q.H., 19 November 1910, pp. 40-53; N.Q.R., 24 December 1906, p. 70; oral interviews.	Chinese names presented difficulties; reconstruction of the subdivision of the plantations presented problems - plantation owners did not record this in great detail; newspaper descriptions of district very helpful as were oral interviews.
1913-1920	Q.S.A. (re: Inkerman Estate); T.T.O.; A.S.C., Rate Books 1913-1920. Oral interviews; John Drysdale to G.H. Pritchard, Brisbane, 21 October 1913, J.C.U., PMR/LB/40 (listed the location of the farmers on the Lower Burdekin).	Oral interviews very helpful in locating some farmers.
1921-1930	Q.G.G., A.S.C., Rate Books 1921-1930; T.T.O.; Oral interviews.	Oral interviews very helpful in locating some farmers.

Abbreviations: A.S.C.: Ayr Shire Council
 Q.E.R.: Queensland Electoral Rolls
 Q.G.G.: Queensland Government Gazette notices that listed farm assignments
 Q.S.A.: Queensland State Archives records
 T.T.O.: Townsville Titles Office records

Townsville Titles Office records and the Ayr Shire Council rate books. Newspaper descriptions of journeys through the Lower Burdekin in the 1900s were very helpful for determining the whereabouts of a farmer within the region, as the accounts usually made reference to the location of farmers in relation to one another. Oral interviews with older Lower Burdekin residents were used to obtain information on where a farmer was situated, but as mentioned previously this was always cross-checked with other documentary evidence before being utilized.

Even though several sources could be used to locate farmers, problems did arise in placing some farmers in specific localities. In the majority of the lists of growers, names appear that could not be located with the use of all the finding aids. These farmers were grouped together and listed as unknown. The unknown location of farmers particularly occurred at two times in this study. The first was between 1897 and 1905 and was mainly associated with Chinese names. It appears owners of blocks would lease land to Chinese to grow cane, but the lease arrangements were never recorded at the Townsville Titles Office or in the Ayr Shire Council rate books. This was certainly the case with Drysdale Bros. and Australian Estates, who both had Chinese and European tenant farmers on their estates before 1905, yet there is no record in the Townsville Titles Office of such arrangements existing. The second occasion when difficulty was experienced in locating farmers took place in the early 1920s and involved the location of around twenty-five suppliers for Inkerman Mill. This occurred partially as a result of the poor state of the Inkerman Mill records which made reading the names of the growers difficult. Although this happened, at no time was there more than six per cent of the total tonnage crushed at Inkerman Mill attributable to growers who could not be located (see Table 9.7). Such an outcome was possible because several of the farmers harvested small crops of less than 100 tons (see Table 9.6).

In addition to not being able to place some growers, difficulties arose when a farmer owned land in two different localities within the district. This presented the situation where the farmer could have grown cane at both sites, or only at one. Usually through a process of elimination it was possible to exclude one of the sites, for it was only the largest growers (and there were only a few) that could afford to grow cane in several different localities. Also, factors such as suitability of the land for agriculture and closeness to transport routes assisted in

making a final decision as to where to situate a farmer. If, however, a doubt still persisted about the location of a farmer after this process of elimination, then the name was placed in the unknown category.

Family arrangements on farms also presented difficulties. Often a family [i.e. father and son(s)] worked a farm. Ownership of land was usually invested with the father, yet two or three similar names appear in a list of suppliers to a given mill. Sorting out family relationships was overcome by reference to electoral rolls and discussions with local residents, who when possible reconstructed details of a family. Once again, if any doubts arose about the accuracy in locating a farmer, he or she would be placed in the unknown category. Only rarely did names that were listed as unknown exceed eight per cent of the total list of growers for a mill for a particular year.

2.4 MAP CONSTRUCTION

Throughout this thesis two types of thematic maps appear. The first presents information on land openings and data on the selection of blocks of land. The second shows the location of farmers supplying a mill at a specific date.

Interpretation of the thematic maps that provide information on land openings and dates of the selection of blocks is relatively straightforward. However some comment is required on the information contained in the thematic maps showing the location of farmers (see for example, Figure 6.6 and Figure 7.10). These maps only show that a farmer was growing sugar cane for a particular mill. There is no attempt to show the areal extent of the cane grown on that block - this information before 1930 does not exist. Indeed, it was only after the introduction of the Peak Year Scheme in 1930 that mill owners began to keep survey plans of the extent of cane grown on their suppliers' farms.

2.5 REGIONAL DIVISIONS

Throughout this thesis reference is made to other sugar growing regions in Queensland. The areal extent of these regions is shown in Figure 2.3.

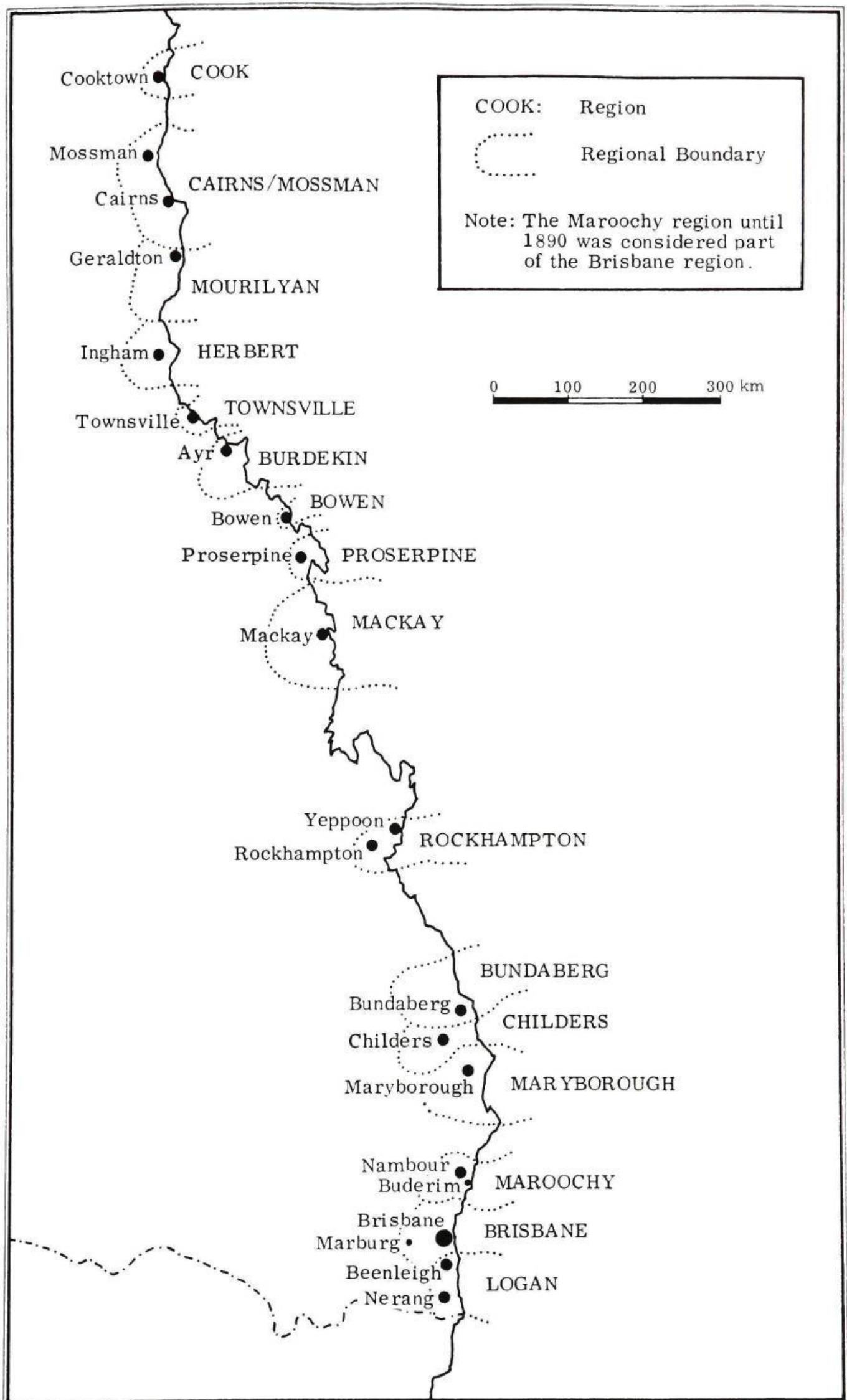


Figure 2.3 The sugar growing regions of Queensland

2.6 CONCLUSIONS

Records relating to the past historical geography of the Lower Burdekin sugar industry came from a variety of sources, including mill records, newspapers and official government documents. Of considerable importance were the registers and lists of growers for each of the mills. Extracting the geographical information from these lists of suppliers required establishing land ownership and the reconstruction of the cadastral boundaries on the Lower Burdekin between 1880 and 1930. This task involved understanding the processes of land openings adopted by the Crown and how blocks of land were subsequently subdivided and changed owners. Only then was it possible to assign farmers to specific localities within the region and produce maps of the location of sugar growers supplying a mill at a specific date. Despite not being able to locate some farmers, especially Chinese sugar growers, the methodology adopted allowed for the accurate analysis of the spatial changes in sugar growing on the Lower Burdekin between 1880 and 1930.

CHAPTER 3

THE PHYSICAL SETTING

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The lands of the Lower Burdekin district stretch in an arc from Mt. Elliott in the north-west to Stokes Range in the south-east and form part of the delta of the Burdekin River. Since the area was settled there have been many descriptions of the region's physical characteristics.¹ It is not within the framework of this thesis to repeat these descriptions in any depth. However, for the purposes of this study a short examination of the geomorphology, soils, vegetation and climate of the region will be undertaken, as it is necessary to appreciate the important aspects of the environment that were encountered by the early settlers. Each of the three selected physical attributes will now be examined separately.

3.2 GEOMORPHOLOGY

According to James and Henry, the Burdekin River delta has the classic cusped delta shape, with the apex in the vicinity of Clare, the left bank skirting the Elliott Range, the right bank boundary skirting the Stokes Range and the rounded shape of the coastal boundary broken only by a large sand spit, Cape Bowling Green.² The delta, formed from deposits laid down during the Pleistocene, overlies a basement of Permian granite, which outcrops at the landward boundaries of the delta and at several places on the delta (e.g. Kelly's Mt., Mt. Alma, Mt. Inkerman). Also, a bedrock saddle or 'rock bar' joins Kelly's Mt. with Stokes Range, across the present course of the Burdekin River, and rock outcrops in the bed of the river at "The Rocks" (see Figure 3.1).

¹ For early descriptions of the Lower Burdekin lands see P.D.T., 4 June 1864; Brisbane Courier, 10 November 1881, p. 8; and Anon., "Tropical Industries: Irrigation on the Burdekin Delta", Queensland Agricultural Journal, 12 (1903): 49-59. For more recent discussions on the region's physical attributes see references in the bibliography to Hopley (1970); Isbell and Murtha (1972); McIntyre and Associates Pty. Ltd. (1976); James and Henry (1977); and Fleming et al. (1981).

² S.E. James and J.L. Henry, Effects of Siltation on Rates of Recharge (Canberra: Australian Govt. Publishing Service, 1981), p. 11.

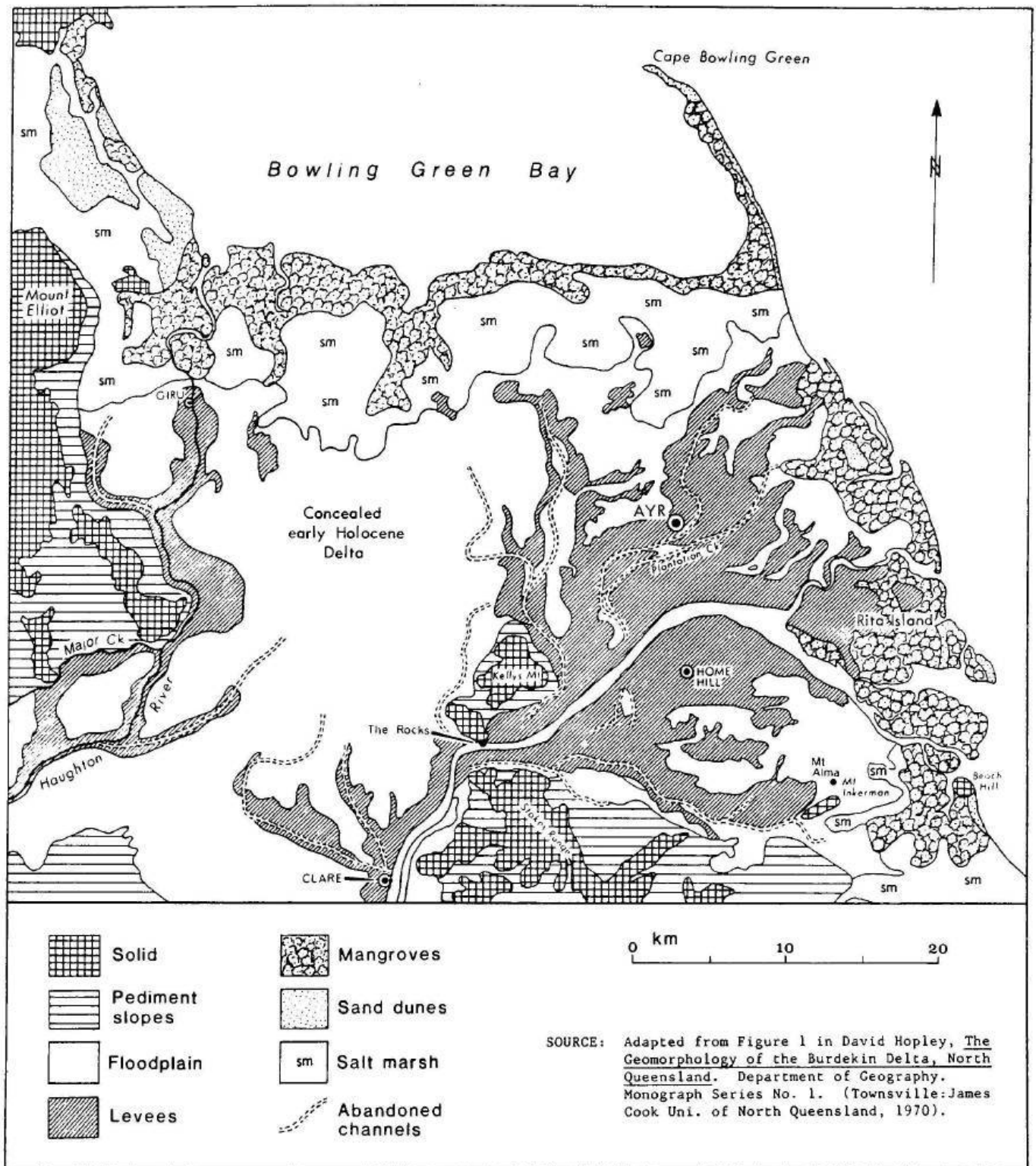


Figure 3.1 Geomorphology of the Burdekin Delta.

This 'rock bar', according to Hopley, meant the Burdekin during the low sea level phases of the Pleistocene was unable to maintain its present course.³ As such, the river was diverted into a channel eastwards of Clare and flowed to the west of Kelly's Mt. and entered Bowling Green Bay through an estuary presently occupied by Barratta Creek. Subsequent courses of the Burdekin after its diversion at "The Rocks" have been:

- (a) on the south side of the present course, following a route between Fowler's and Munro's Lagoons (see Figure 3.2),
- (b) along the line of Sheep Station Creek,
- (c) the route of Lilliesmere Lagoon,
- (d) along the present channel of Plantation Creek,
- (e) the Anabranh, and
- (f) the present course.⁴

The Haughton River may have also occupied different courses, such as:

- (a) the route through Healy's Lagoon, the present Anabranh of the Haughton (see Figure 3.2),
- (b) the channel South of Major Creek Mt., through Green Swamp Dam and into Bowling Green Bay via the estuary occupied by Barratta Creek, and
- (c) the present course.⁵

As a consequence of the wanderings of the Burdekin and Haughton Rivers, the majority of the eastern part of the delta and around the present day course of Major Creek and the Haughton River are covered in coalescing levees. The gently sloping levees extend up to a kilometre from the channels which they border and are typically three to four metres above the surrounding flood plain. Swamps and lagoons (e.g. Labatt Lagoon, Red Lilly Lagoon) and former channels, some of which are creeks today (e.g. Plantation, Kalamia and Sheep Station Creeks) are

³ David Hopley, The Geomorphology of the Burdekin Delta, North Queensland, Department of Geography. Monograph Series No. 1 (Townsville: James Cook Uni. of North Queensland, 1970), p. 5.

⁴ James and Henry, Effects of Siltation on Rates of Recharge, p. 13.

⁵ James and Henry, Effects of Siltation on Rates of Recharge, p. 13.

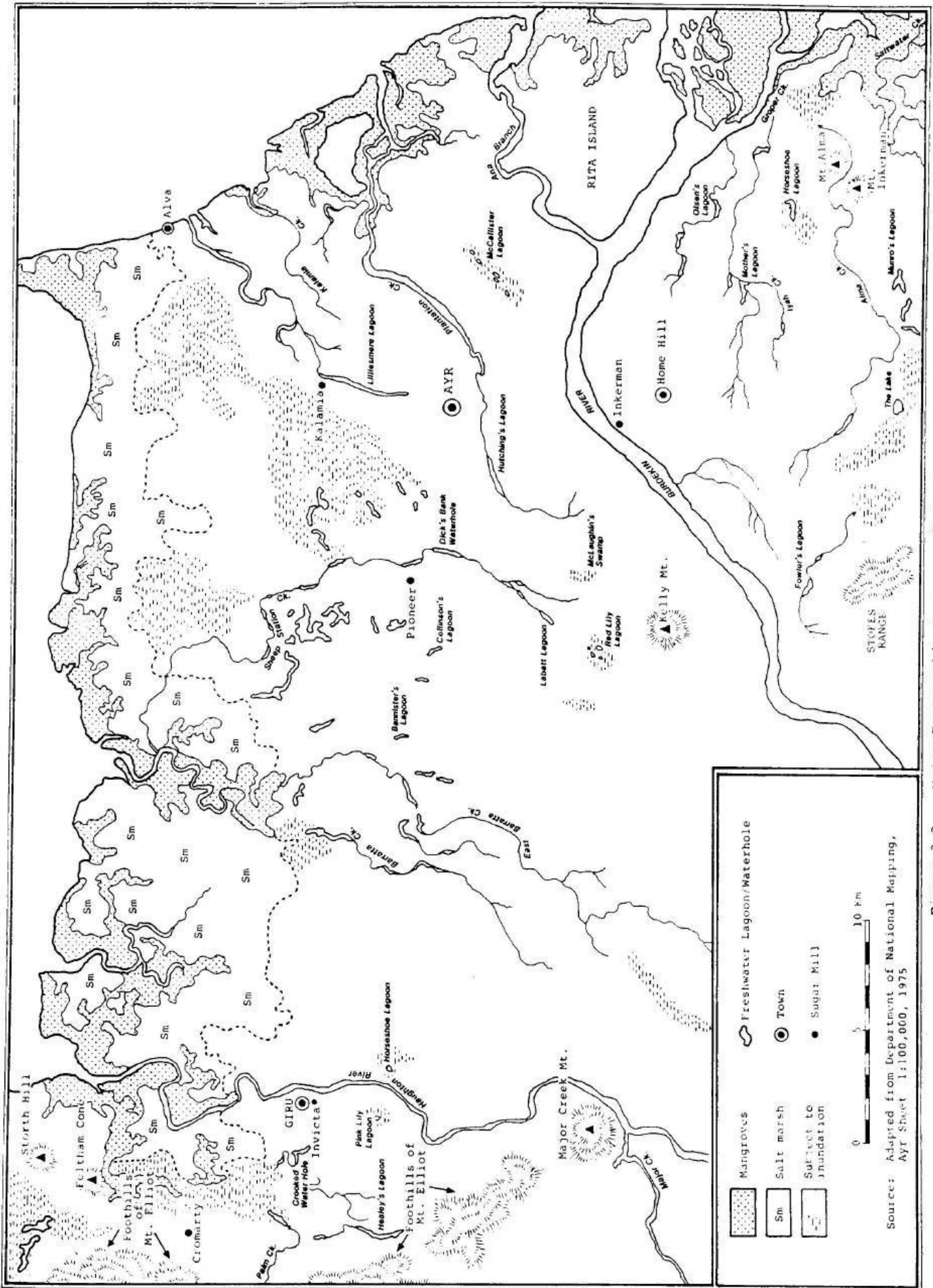


Figure 3.2 Major Topographic Features of the Lower Burdekin

found where the levees are located⁶.

Fringing the levees between the Burdekin and Haughton Rivers are floodplain deposits. Hopley, however, found these deposits were thin and concealed a complex Holocene delta.⁷ In the eastern part of the delta, the floodplain is limited to a tract at the base of Stokes Ranges and south-east of Home Hill (Figure 3.1). Generally, relief on the floodplains is slight though gilgal micro-relief features are common.⁸ Intermittent streams, the most notable being the Barratta Creek system, and a few swamps, lagoons and marshes are also found on the Burdekin River floodplain. Saline areas, beyond the reach of the present high tides, also occur and probably originated as salt flats within the tidal range of higher sea levels. Evidence of such a saline area is found in the salt marsh to the south-east of Mt. Inkerman.⁹

On the seaward side of the floodplain and levee deposits of the Burdekin delta are areas of saltmarsh and mangroves. The coastal fringe, in places exhibits beach ridges and dunes. On the landward side of the floodplain and levees are pediment slopes associated with the granite outcrops.

3.3 SOILS

Soil associations of the Townsville-Burdekin region were mapped by Isbell and Murtha in 1970 and were denoted by the name of the dominant soil type in the association. Part of this map covering the Lower Burdekin is shown in Figure 3.3.

The soil associations bear a close relationship to the basic features of the geomorphology and topography of the region described in Chapter 3.2. The Rita Island and Plantation Creek levee systems comprise deep loams, which show little profile differentiation. The Inkerman, Sheep Station Creek, Haughton River and Healy's Lagoon levee systems consist

⁶ Hopley, The Geomorphology of the Burdekin Delta, pp. 14-15.

⁷ Hopley, The Geomorphology of the Burdekin Delta, pp. 10-11.

⁸ Hopley, The Geomorphology of the Burdekin Delta, p. 16.

⁹ James and Henry, Effects of Siltation Rates of Recharge, p. 13.

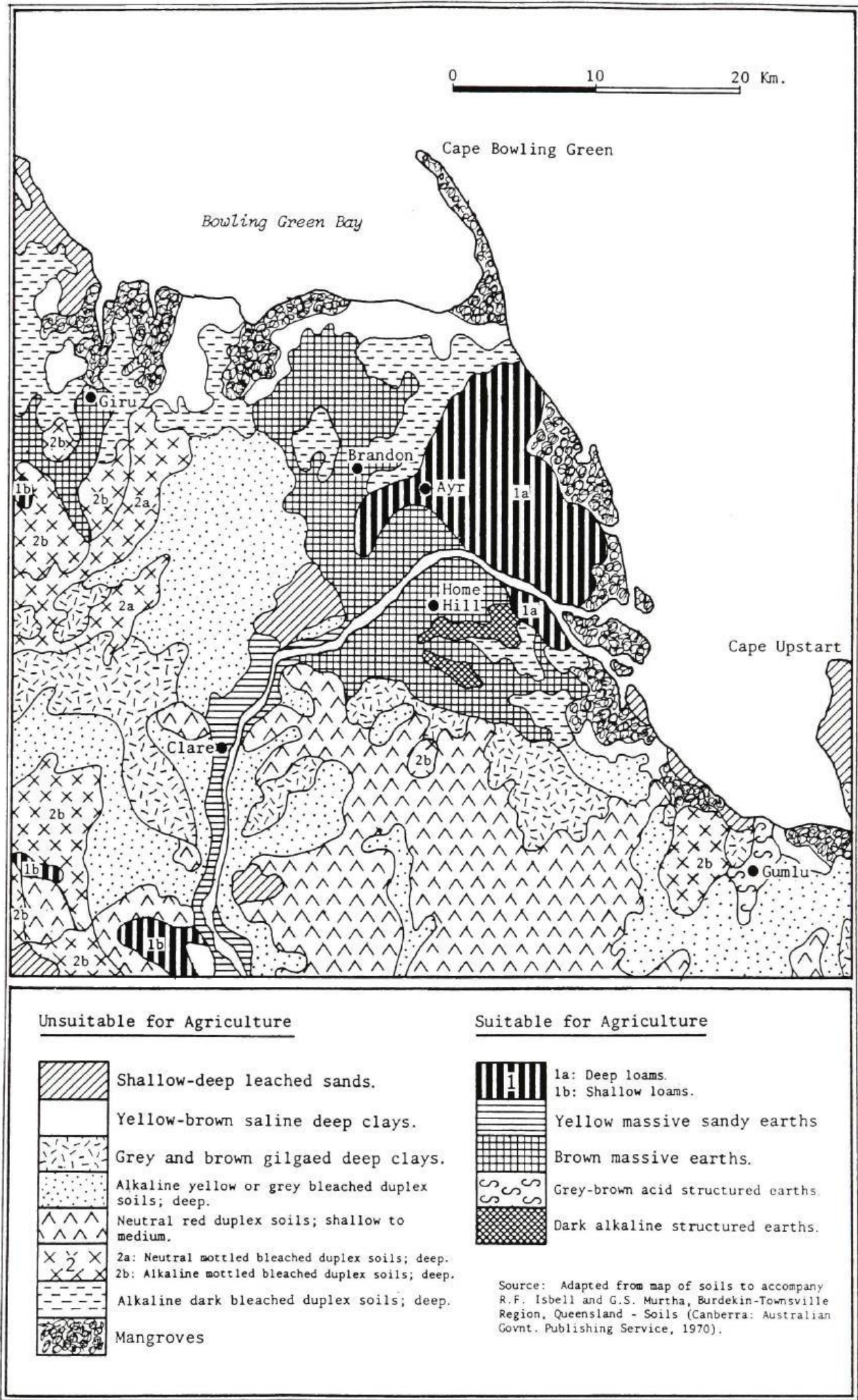


Figure 3.3 Soils of the Lower Burdekin.

of brown massive earths, that grade from brownish grey sands to loams at the surface to subsoils of grey or yellow sandy clays. The Major Creek and Haughton River Overflow levees are composed of neutral-alkaline duplex soils that have tough clay subsoils abruptly overlain by hard setting sandy to loamy surface soils. The Barratta Creek floodplain deposits consist of duplex soils with grey-brown and mottled yellow alkaline subsoils overlain by slightly acidic hard setting loamy surface soils. Fringing the Burdekin River, upstream from Ayr, there is a narrow band of yellow massive sandy earths that grade from grey-brown sands or loamy sands at the surface to yellow-brown or yellow sandy clay loams or sandy clays. Coastal localities contain shallow to deep leached sands, yellow-brown saline deep clays and alkaline dark bleached duplex soils that have clay subsoils abruptly overlain by slightly acidic, hard setting loamy surface soils.

The deep loams have moderate to high inherent fertility and water holding capacity and are easily worked. The massive brown earths have moderate to high nutrient status and, although they have limited water holding capacity, they are fairly permeable. These two soil types are the most immediately suitable for sugar-cane cultivation. In contrast, the duplex soils are not nearly as suitable for agriculture. The tough clay subsoils impede internal drainage and the hard setting loamy surface soils cause excessive runoff losses from high intensity rainfall. The nutrient status is also usually low. Some success has been had, however, with rice growing on these soils.¹⁰

3.4 VEGETATION

Isbell and Murtha, using a scheme proposed by Specht,¹¹ mapped the vegetation of the Burdekin-Townsville region in 1972. Part of this map, covering the Lower Burdekin, and descriptions of the plant communities

¹⁰ Summarized from details in R.F. Isbell and G.G. Murtha, Burdekin-Townsville Region, Queensland - Soils (Canberra: Australian Govt. Publishing Service, 1970).

¹¹ Specht's scheme classified plant communities according to life form (tree, grass, herb), tallest stratum (tree, shrub or grass layer) and projective foliage cover of the tallest stratum. For a full discussion of his scheme see R.L. Specht, "Vegetation", in The Australian Environment (4th ed. rev.), Ed. G.W. Leeper (Melbourne: C.S.I.R.O. and Melbourne Uni. Press, 1970), pp. 46-47.

found in the region are presented in Figure 3.4.

With the exception of the coastal fringe, much of the Lower Burdekin at the time of European settlement was covered by various Eucalypt woodlands and open woodlands. Prominent tree species in these communities included Eucalyptus tessellaris (Moreton Bay Ash), E. drepanophylla (Narrow Leafed Ironbark), E. alba (Poplar Gum) and E. papuana (Ghost Gum). Various associations of these trees and other species (e.g. Melaleuca spp., Pandanus spp., Tristania suaveolens) in response to local edaphic, climatic and topographic environments have produced the different woodland communities on the delta. In all the woodland communities, the shrub layer was absent, or poorly developed, but a well developed ground layer dominated by grasses was present. Indeed, early descriptions of the Lower Burdekin report the area as being "well grassed" or "richly grassed".¹²

Occupation of the district by pastoralists and farmers over the last 120 years has had a significant impact on the region's natural vegetation. Much of the Moreton Bay Ash woodlands on the levee deposits of the Burdekin and Haughton Rivers have been cleared and replaced with farms. Similarly, the Poplar Gum open woodlands between the Burdekin and Haughton Rivers have also been altered due to the activities associated with cattle grazing. Even the mangroves near Ayr have been affected, for a report in the late 1890s noted that this plant community was being cleared and used as firewood in Kalamia Mill.¹³

¹² George Dalrymple, "Exploration of the Lower Course of the River Burdekin, in Queensland, and its identification with the River Wickham", Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society (London), 33 (1863): 4; P.D.T. 4 June 1864; Brisbane Courier, 10 November 1881, p. 8.

¹³ Gen.Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, 17 January 1898, M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book, No. 2, p. 494.

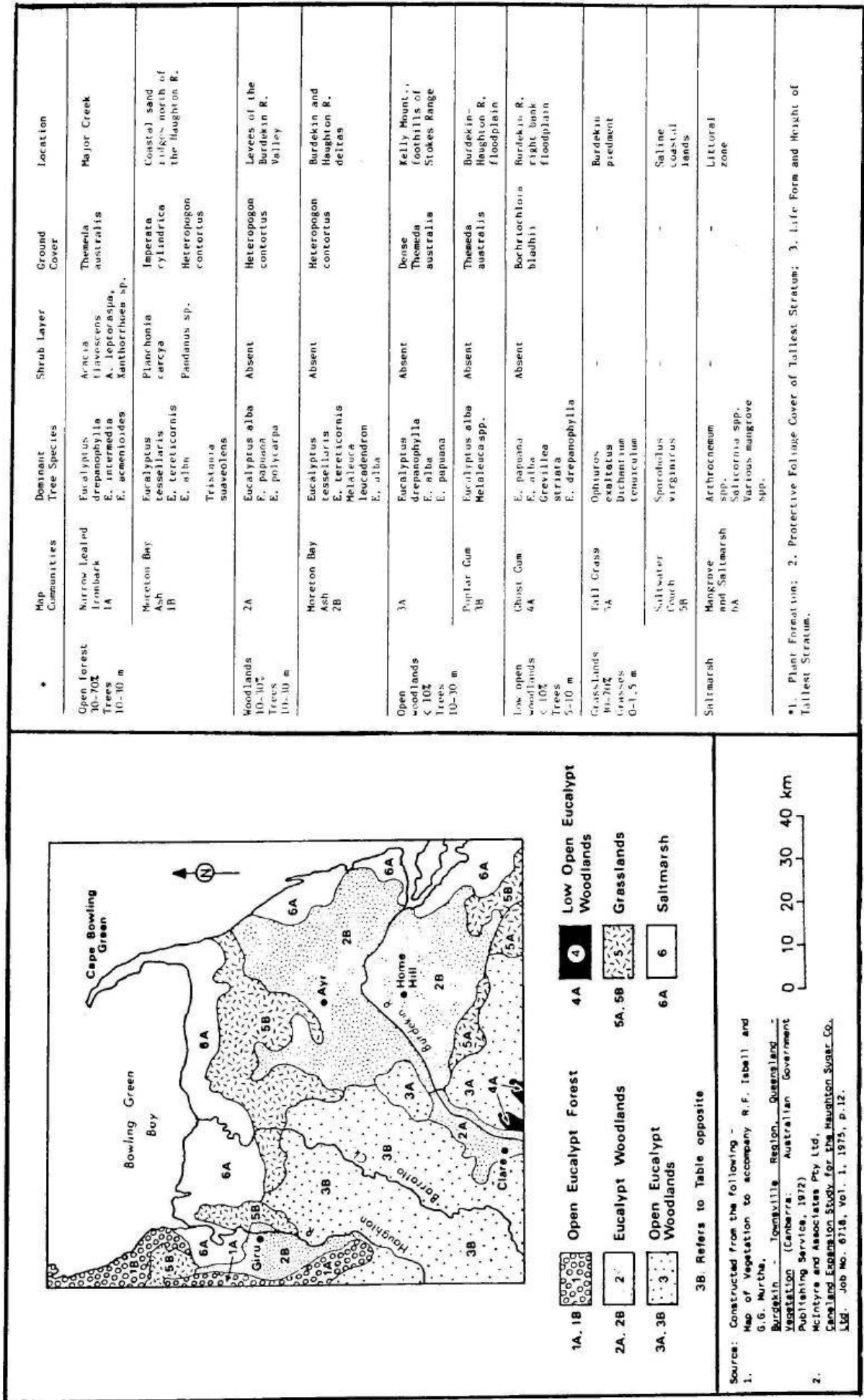


Figure 3.4 Vegetation of the Lower Burdekin

3.5 CLIMATE

According to Dick, the Lower Burdekin is located in an Aw, Koppen climate type.¹⁴ This climate is characterized by a long dry season in the 'winter' half of the year with rainfall chiefly in the 'summer' half of the year. Reference to Table 3.1 highlights this feature of the climate quite convincingly. It is also interesting to note that even within the region there is wide variation between the amount of rainfall received at one locality compared to another.

On average, Ayr receives just over 1,000 mm of rainfall a year (Table 3.1). Most of this rainfall is associated with tropical cyclones and to a lesser extent thunderstorms. Hail falls very rarely and only in small amounts. Compared to other sugar growing centres, particularly those north of Townsville, Ayr receives less annual rainfall (Table 3.2). In addition, the rainfall is particularly unreliable, as illustrated in Figure 3.5. The important feature of the diagram is not only the wide variability of falls in terms of frequency of occurrence but also the relatively low level of median values (the amount of rain which is exceeded in fifty per cent of years). Therefore, at Ayr, based on seventy-eight years of records, fifty per cent of the January falls have been less than 200 mm. Further, while the extreme falls in January range from nil to nearly 1,000 mm, the variability is best indicated by the fact that in four years out of five, the monthly rainfall for January at Ayr can be expected to lie in the range 40 to 640 mm.¹⁵

Monthly temperature characteristics for Ayr are shown in Table 3.3. The average mean monthly temperatures at Ayr range from 27.4°C in January to 18.4°C in July. Heat waves and frosts are rare.

Sugar-cane needs a yearly rainfall of at least 1,250 mm and monthly mean temperatures of above 15°C.¹⁶ Therefore, on the basis of the

¹⁴ Map of "Climatic Types of Australia, according to Koppen's 1936 scheme" accompanying the article: Ross Dick, "A Map of the Climates of Australia According to Koppen's Principles of Definition", Queensland Geographical Journal, 3rd series, 3 (1975): 33-69.

¹⁵ P.M. Fleming et al., Burdekin Project Ecological Study (Canberra: Australian Govt. Publishing Service, 1981), p. 20.

¹⁶ E. Linacre and J. Hobbs, The Australian Climatic Environment (Brisbane: John Wiley and Sons, 1977), p. 223.

Table 3.1. Rainfall at Selected Stations on the Lower Burdekin (mm)

Station	Average Monthly Rainfall												Average Annual Rainfall
	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	
Ayr	246	327	200	62	36	33	24	11	11	14	38	101	1011
Home Hill (10th St.)	231	282	168	54	30	29	21	10	10	17	33	92	980
Home Hill	217	274	166	51	31	30	22	11	10	17	36	97	961
Inkerman Stn. (Homestead)	215	274	174	54	33	27	20	10	6	20	36	94	963
Kalamia	240	310	203	66	37	31	24	10	10	14	39	96	1080
Shildon Farm (Giru)	292	350	237	65	36	35	33	14	13	30	58	122	1285
Woodhouse (Claredale)	195	222	173	41	26	32	26	9	10	17	44	87	881

SOURCE: S.E. James and J.L. Henry, Effects of Siltation on Rates of Recharge (Canberra: Australian Govt. Publishing Service, 1977), p. 10.

Table 3.2. Average Annual Rainfall at Selected Stations in Queensland's Sugar Growing Regions (mm)

	Moss- man	Cairns	Babinda	Innis- fail	Tully	Ingham	Mackay	Bunda- berg	Mary- borough	Nambour	Been- leigh
Average Annual Rainfall	2373	2016	4188	3727	4284	2040	1658	1155	1185	1826	1220

SOURCE: Courtesy of the Bureau of Meteorology.

Table 3.3. Temperatures at Ayr (°C)

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	Annual
Av. max.	32.0	31.6	30.9	30.1	27.9	25.7	25.0	26.1	27.9	29.6	31.1	32.0	29.1
Av. mean	27.4	27.1	26.1	24.6	21.9	19.7	18.4	19.3	21.6	23.8	25.7	27.1	23.6
Av. min.	22.7	22.5	21.2	19.1	15.9	13.7	11.7	12.6	15.3	18.2	20.4	22.1	17.9

SOURCE: As in Table 3.1.

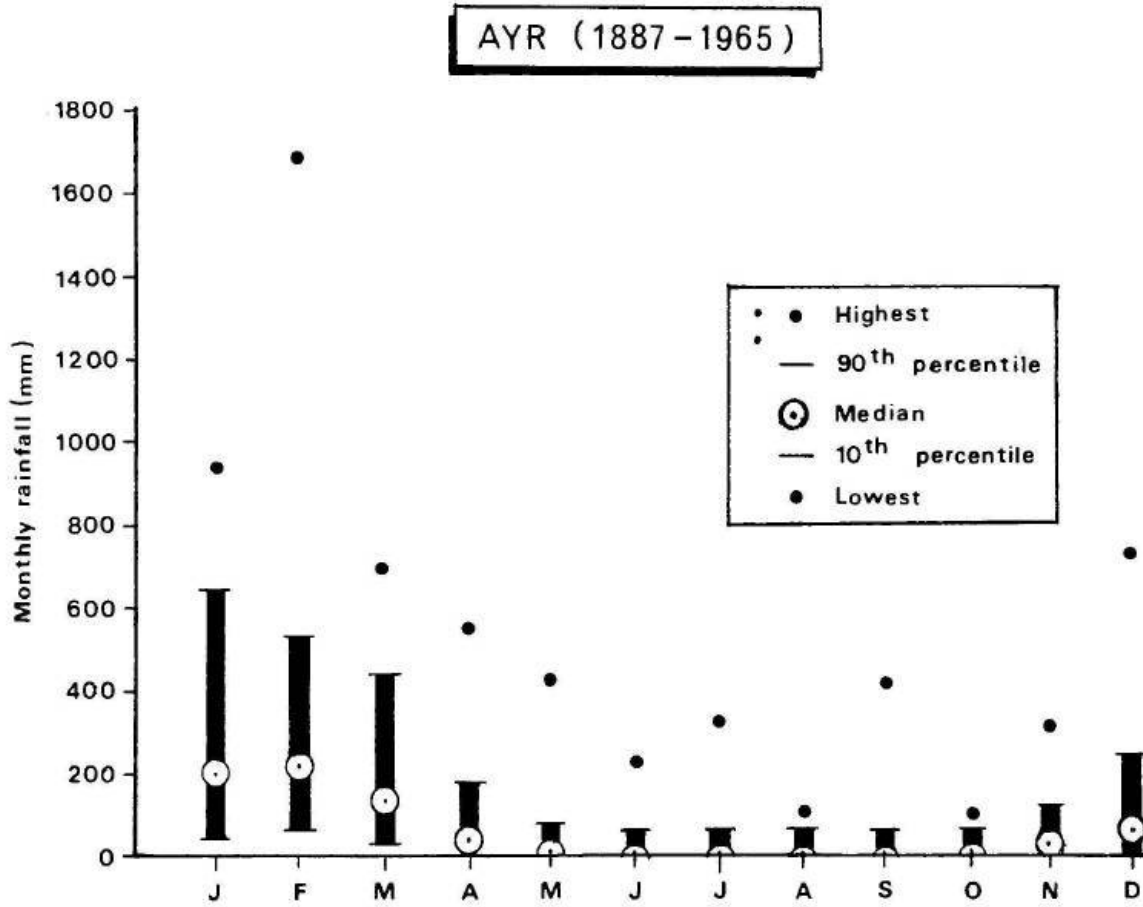


Figure 3.5 Monthly Rainfall Variability, Ayr

Source: P.M. Fleming et al., Burdekin Project Ecological Study (Canberra: Australian Govt. Publishing Service, 1981.) p. 22.

above information, the Lower Burdekin region is not climatically well suited to the cultivation of sugar-cane. Indeed, in thirty-two of the fifty years covered, the total yearly rainfall fell below 1,250 mm (see Table 3.4). Moreover, a study at the Brandon Sugar Experiment Station between 1967 and 1976 found that the mean yearly loss by evaporation was 2,110 mm.¹⁷ Fifty-one per cent of this loss occurred between April and October, the period when rainfall is usually at its lowest. Accordingly, the high potential evaporative losses, the strong seasonality in rainfall incidence and variable rainfall demands that irrigation must be provided, not only to provide adequate moisture during the drier months of the year, but also to eliminate the potential reduction in cane growth that could occur in a poor wet season. King suggests that on the Lower Burdekin a typical irrigation program, assuming no interruptions by rain, would provide an interval of approximately eight weeks between waterings in the winter months, with the interval decreasing as temperatures rose in the spring and summer period.¹⁸ Of course, a farmer may decide to vary the above rate of irrigation depending upon the soil type on the farm, the variety of cane being cultivated and temperatures during the year.

3.6 GROUNDWATER

A large portion of the levees of the Burdekin River delta is underlain by a productive aquifer. In the western part of the Lower Burdekin region the main aquifer is limited to the present bed of the Haughton River and recently abandoned channels of the Haughton River. The main water bearing soil consists of a coarse sand grading in some cases upwards to a gravel aquifer. The underground water bearing material varies in thickness from one-third to one-half of the depth from ground level to bedrock. Depth of bedrock generally increases in a north-easterly direction, varying from 10.6 metres near Stokes Range to greater than 80 metres in the north. Consequently, the base level of the

¹⁷ McIntyre and Associates Pty. Ltd., Pioneer and Inkerman Mills Caneland Expansion Study for Pioneer Sugar Mills Ltd. Job. No. G750, pp. 2/12, 2/13.

¹⁸ Norman King, Manual of Cane Growing (rev. ed., Melbourne: Angus and Robertson, 1963), pp. 145-146.

Table 3.4

Total Yearly Rainfall (mm) for the Lower Burdekin, 1880-1930

Year	Total	Year	Total
1880	1150	1906	1306
1881	1400	1907	789
1882	1625	1908	890
1883	875	1909	1020
1884	1550	1910	1565
1885	675	1911	1673
1886	1250	1912	564
1887	1172	1913	1380
1888	532	1914	899
1889	1151	1915	261
1890	2314	1916	959
1891	1669	1917	1715
1892	1056	1918	1196
1893	858	1919	515
1894	2165	1920	1330
1895	1089	1921	965
1896	2027	1922	761
1897	1196	1923	289
1898	1274	1924	1089
1899	1081	1925	847
1900	406	1926	497
1901	1045	1927	1406
1902	297	1928	999
1903	1244	1929	1462
1904	489	1930	766
1905	898		

Note: Totals for 1880-1886 were recorded at Airdmillan plantation. Subsequent totals were recorded at the Ayr Post Office.

Source: A.C. Macmillan, "Abstract of Rainfall for 21 years at Airdmillan", A.N.U., Archives of Business and Labour, A.E.R., 165/305, and Bureau of Meteorology.

alluvium in places is well below mean sea level and artificial recharge has been necessary since the 1960s to reduce the danger of salt water intrusion into the aquifers.

The level of the underground supply fluctuates according to the season, the density of local rainfall received at a given time and the length and depth of flow in the river at flood time. Natural recharge appears to be through the bed of the Haughton River in the west, and through the banks of the Burdekin in the east, but requiring a significant river level to overcome a bedrock high east of Clare. Further recharge may occur through the channel of Barratta Creek.

Variable and irregular rainfall, coupled with high evaporation rates has resulted in the widespread use of groundwater on the Lower Burdekin since the 1880s. The considerable growth of the sugar industry in the region since 1950 has, however, placed a heavy demand on the ground water supplies. Consequently, the artificial replenishment of the aquifers has occurred through pumping of water from the Burdekin River into Plantation and Kalamia Creeks. Such a program has allowed the extensive irrigation of the yearly sugar crops on the Lower Burdekin to continue and as noted above staved off salt water intrusion into the aquifers.¹⁹

3.7 CONCLUSIONS

In summary, the earliest settlers on the Lower Burdekin would have encountered country that was thickly timbered near the creeks and rivers and more lightly timbered on the Burdekin River floodplain. Lagoons, swamps and marshes abounded in some localities within the region, giving the appearance of a well watered district. However, despite its inviting appearance to prospective settlers, there was a harsher side to the Lower Burdekin. Variable rainfall, resulting in floods and droughts, was and still is a common feature of the Lower Burdekin. Indeed, it was this aspect of the region's physical geography which caused the sugar growers the most concern and resulted in the extensive use of the region's underground water for irrigation.

¹⁹ Details from Fleming et al., Burdekin Project Ecological Study, pp. 173-179.

CHAPTER 4

THE PASTORAL BASIS, 1860-1876

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In 1860 the lands of the Lower Burdekin were in Aboriginal hands. However, the Lower Burdekin lay within the Kennedy Pastoral District, which the Queensland Government proclaimed open to selection in January 1861. Four years later, European settlers had selected large contiguous runs which covered the entire region with the exception of the coastal fringe. These large pastoral runs still dominated the region in 1876 - closer settlement and agriculture had made limited progress. The reasons for this course of development will now be considered, beginning with a brief review of the land legislation in Queensland that determined the course of settlement on the Lower Burdekin only between 1860 and 1876. No attempt is made to provide an indepth analysis on the subject. Indeed, the topic has been the subject of two doctoral theses.¹

4.2 QUEENSLAND LAND LEGISLATION, 1860-1876: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

With separation from New South Wales in late 1859, the district of Moreton Bay - or as it was henceforth to be known, the colony of Queensland - turned optimistically to the future. Finance, however, was urgently required if the new colony's dreams of progress were to be realized. If money was lacking, land was plentiful - its development was to be actively encouraged.² Therefore, during the first session of the new Queensland parliament the government introduced legislation which dealt with the country destined to be used for cultivation and the territory to be utilized for pastoral purposes.

The first enactment laid down the principle that in no case should the price of land be less than £1 per acre. Lands were to be divided into town, suburban or country lots, and put up to auction at this price, and such as remained unsold could be disposed of privately. The chief feature of the Act, however, was the setting apart of agricultural

¹ Beverley Kingston, "Land Legislation and Administration in Queensland, 1859-1876", Ph.D. thesis, Monash University, 1968; G.P. Taylor, "Land policy and the development of settlement in Queensland", Ph.D. thesis, London University, 1966.

² Fitzgerald, From the Dreaming to 1915, p. 125.

reserves for the purposes of actual settlement and cultivation.³ This legislation, although requiring many amending Acts inaugurated most of the land devices peculiar to Queensland. It commenced the definitely marked agricultural reserves; it declared in favour of 'small men'; and its strict conditions started the trend which successive Land Ministers carried further.⁴

The Crown Lands Occupation Act of 1860 which was passed at the same time was intended to encourage the exploration and use of new country for pastoral purposes. To southern squatters threatened by hostile legislation, its terms claims Fitzgerald, were attractive: anyone could apply for a one-year license to occupy a run of one hundred square miles; within nine months the occupier had to apply for a fourteen-year lease conditional on having stocked the run to one-fourth of its assumed capacity of one hundred sheep, or twenty head of cattle to the square mile.⁵ According to Kingston the legislation was clearly designed to allow a certain amount of government supervision while at the same time it aimed not to discourage improvement and investment of capital. The government wanted to encourage rapid and productive occupation of the country by the pastoralists while retaining the power to facilitate a change to agriculture when future conditions made it feasible. The minimum stocking conditions were intended to prevent pastoralists and land speculators from having Crown lands yet not utilizing them.⁶ The 1860 legislation was replaced by the Pastoral Leases Act of 1863, which allowed easier terms and five year leases for land used for pastoral purposes in the settled districts or fourteen year leases in the unsettled districts.

The principles of the 1863 legislation remained intact until the new tenure of 1868, but in the interim there was a boom in pastoral occupation, particularly in the north of the colony, until the financial

³ W. Epps, Land Systems of Australasia (London: Swann Sonnenschein & Co., 1894), pp. 87-88. See also Beverley Kingston, "The Search for an Alternative to Free Selection", Queensland Heritage, 1,5(1966): 3-9.

⁴ Stephen Roberts, History of Australian Land Settlement, 1788-1920 (1924; rpt. Melbourne: Macmillan, 1968), p. 260.

⁵ Epps, Land Systems of Australasia, p. 89; Fitzgerald, From the Dreaming to 1915, p. 139.

⁶ Beverley Kingston, "The Origins of Queensland's Comprehensive Land Policy", Queensland Heritage, 1 (1965): 5.

crisis of 1866.⁷ Agriculture on the other hand made limited headway in the years immediately after separation. Cotton growing proved the most attractive in the early 1860s due to a generous government subsidy of fourpence a pound.⁸ Sugar-cane was also looking promising as a major crop for the colony. Its cultivation - aided by the importation of Melanesian labourers - was being encouraged under the Sugar and Coffee Regulations of 1864 and 1866,⁹ although in 1867 less than 2,000 acres were under sugar-cane in Queensland (see Table 4.1). Cereal crops, however, were limited to maize - in 1866 Queensland relied on southern colonies, particularly South Australia, for most of her primary produce and feed.¹⁰

The early Queensland land legislation, despite its intent, did not lead to a substantial increase in the number of small settlers in the colony. Indeed, Roberts claims that the small settler by the mid-1860s was in a difficult position, owing to the inroads of the squatters and the restrictive nature of the 1860 and 1863 legislation.¹¹ To reconcile these conflicting interests the government led by the Hon. Robert Mackenzie introduced the Crown Lands Alienation Act of 1868.

With respect to the pastoral lands, the 1868 land legislation provided that lessees in the settled districts¹² voluntarily bringing their runs under the Act were allowed to divide the runs equally into two. The government resumed the best section for closer settlement and leased the other half to the grazier for a ten year term at a rental proportionately equal to that formerly paid to the whole of the leasehold area. To compensate for this loss of grazing lands, the pastoral tenant was given a

⁷ Roberts, History of Australian Land Settlement, p. 220. For details on the pastoral expansion in the north of Queensland in the 1860s see Anne Allingham, Taming the Wilderness: The First Decade of Pastoral Settlement in the Kennedy District. Studies in North Queensland History, No. 1 (Townsville: James Cook Uni. Press, 1977).

⁸ For details on cotton growing in Queensland see J. Farnfield, "Cotton and the Search for an Agricultural Staple in Early Queensland", Queensland Heritage, 2,4 (1971): 20-25.

⁹ Q.G.G., 5 (1864): 868; Q.G.G., 7 (1866): 1162.

¹⁰ Fitzgerald, From the Dreaming to 1915, p. 188.

¹¹ Roberts, History of Australian Land Settlement, p. 261.

¹² The settled districts were defined as East and West Moreton, the greater part of the Darling Downs, Wide Bay, and all the lands within reasonable distance of navigable rivers and those portions of the Port Curtis and Kennedy Pastoral Districts within thirty miles of the sea coast and extending north to Rockingham Bay (Q.G.G., 9 (1868): 198-199).

Table 4.1. Distribution of Sugar-Cane Acreage, Queensland, 1866-1878

Region	1866	1867	1868	1869	1870	1871	1872	1873	1874	1875	1876	1877	1878
Herbert/Mourilyan	0	10	93	90	95	103	404	399	501	513	537	392	485
Townsville ¹	60	65	50	10	13	12	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Bowen	12	59	0	45	81	32	57	51	76	71	23	12	0
Mackay	55	267	414	919	1413	2493	3436	4548	4927	4844	5568	5768	6823
Rockhampton	0	0	0	0	4	43	101	47	1	0	0	0	0
Bundaberg ²	-	-	-	-	-	-	311	373	381	322	330	540	647
Maryborough	248	456	807	1261	1488	2701	2689	3626	3525	3527	3384	4353	4472
Brisbane	105	718	1017	1498	1758	1203	2450	2518	2438	1806	1394	1525	1478
Logan	125	416	810	1342	2006	1842	2148	2829	2747	2352	2424	2621	2675
Total	605	1991	3191	5165	6858	8429	11597	14392	14596	13435	13660	15211	16580

Notes: (1) Includes the Lower Burdekin region

(2) Prior to 1872 the Bundaberg region was part of the Maryborough region.

Source: Queensland Statistical Registers, 1866-1878.

pre-emptive right of selection to the extent of one acre for every 10 s. value of improvement. Lessees who did not accept these terms were to be permitted to retain their runs as formerly, but the leaseholds were to be subject to resumption in whole or in part for free selection or for sale by auction.

Land resumed from the pastoral holdings or within railway, township or agricultural reserves was declared open for selection by conditional purchase. It was divided for the purposes of the Act into (1) agricultural, (2) first-class pastoral, and (3) second-class pastoral lands. Agricultural lands, in blocks of from 40 to 640 acres could be leased for ten years at an annual rental of 1s. 6d. per acre. First-class pastoral land in areas of from 80 to 2560 acres could be obtained at an annual rental of 1s. per acre; while second-class pastoral land in blocks of from 80 to 7680 acres could be selected with an annual rental of 6d. per acre. At the end of ten years, on due payment of rent, the land could be made freehold. The conditions attached to the leases in the case of agricultural land were the selections should be substantially fenced and resided upon either by the lessee or his bailiff during the term of the lease, but if within three years it could be shown that the residence conditions had been met, and improvements to the value of 10s. per acre made, the freehold could be obtained on the balance of the purchase money then due. In the case of pastoral lands, the freehold could be secured in a similar manner after two years residence, and upon improvements being made to the value of 10s. and 5s. per acre respectively in the two classes.¹³

Under the 1868 land legislation provision was also made for sugar and coffee leases to be obtained over areas ranging from 320 to 1,280 acres. Conditions were similar to those imposed in the case of agricultural land, except that before the freehold could be granted, at the end of three years' residence, it had to be shown that one-tenth of the land had been devoted to the cultivation of sugar or coffee. As a result of the selection under this clause, the acreage under sugar-cane in Queensland trebled between 1868 and 1874, with considerable expansion taking place in the Mackay and Maryborough regions (see Table 4.1). Melanesians continued to be imported to provide labour for the expanding

¹³ Summarized from details in Epps, Land Systems of Australasia, pp. 92-93. See also C. Bernays, Queensland Politics During Sixty Years: 1859-1919 (Brisbane: Government Printer, 1919), pp. 314-315.

industry. However, outbreaks of the 'rust' disease, which caused yields to drop, led to a contraction in the area under sugar-cane in 1875-76.¹⁴

According to Roberts the 1868 legislation, although complex, was twenty years in advance of the land legislation devised in the other Australian colonies. It attempted to establish a group of settlers who were half farmers and half graziers and who were to be a barrier between the smaller free selector on the one hand the large squatter on the other.¹⁵ However, faults of administration and the inherent weakness of the Act soon caused trouble. It became obvious that the legislation favoured the squatters in actual practice, for they held and retained the best land and through both legitimate purchase and dummying they secured additional land. Furthermore, it became apparent that even the largest selections made available were too small for economic stock-rearing.¹⁶

In order to stop dummying and the selection of large areas of country for speculation, and as an encouragement to a resident population of small holders, the government introduced the Homestead Areas Act of 1872. Under this legislation, selectors were permitted to secure on lease, within specified areas, homestead blocks not exceeding 80 acres of agricultural or 160 acres of pastoral land for periods of five years at an annual rental of 9 d. per acre for the former and 6 d. for the latter. Complete payment of rent and continuous residence during the term of the lease, entitled the lessee to the freehold title, provided the land had been fenced and one-tenth cultivated. No person was allowed to acquire more than one homestead block.¹⁷

The above legislation and the 1868 land act, although seeking to encourage closer settlement and intensive use of the colony's land, failed to stimulate agriculture in Queensland in the 1870s. Taylor has argued that this occurred because agriculture could not be carried out successfully in the colony. The agricultural selectors needed a considerable amount of capital to pay the annual rent and the cost of compulsory improvements, and to cover living expenses until the first

¹⁴ For details on the 'rust crisis' see Bolton, A Thousand Miles Away, p. 77; Dorothy Jones, Cardwell Shire Story (Brisbane: Cardwell Shire Council, 1961), p. 217; John Kerr, Pioneer Pageant (Mackay: Pioneer Shire Council, 1980), pp. 52-55.

¹⁵ Roberts, History of Australian Land Settlement, p. 261.

¹⁶ G.P. Taylor, "Political Attitudes and Land Policy in Queensland 1868-1894", Pacific Historical Review, 37, 3 (1968): 251.

¹⁷ Epps, Land Systems of Australia, p. 94.

government assistance was not forthcoming. In addition, with the exception of sugar, there was little demand for what the settlers produced - the local market was limited due to the small population. In any case transport facilities hardly existed within the colony, so the settlers could not send their produce where there might have been some demand for it, either within or outside Queensland.¹⁸

4.3 EUROPEAN OCCUPATION OF THE LOWER BURDEKIN, 1860-1878

In 1860 the Lower Burdekin lands were in Aboriginal hands. The Bindal tribe occupied the country north of the Burdekin River as far as Cape Cleveland and inland to the Leichhardt Range; the Juru tribe's territory extended south of the Burdekin River as far as Bowen and inland to the Bogie Range.¹⁹ However, between 1861 and 1864 all the Lower Burdekin, with the exception of the coastal fringe, was incorporated into contiguous pastoral runs. The names and boundaries of these pastoral runs are shown in Figure 4.1.

A feature of these early years of settlement on the Lower Burdekin was the continual change in the lessees of the pastoral runs, suggestive of a strong speculative component in the initial acquisition of the pastoral leases.²⁰ However, by 1865 all the Lower Burdekin pastoral runs were controlled by either the Sydney merchant, Robert Towns²¹ or a partnership between John Gilchrist, John Watt, John Young and R.B. Dickson. These lessees, unlike their predecessors, went on to occupy their respective pastoral runs into the mid-1870s.

¹⁸ Taylor, "Political Attitudes and Land Policy in Queensland", p. 251.

¹⁹ Details obtained from a map of 'Aboriginal Tribal Boundaries in Australia' in N. Tindale, Aboriginal Tribes of Australia (Los Angeles: Uni. of California Press, 1974). For descriptions of the Lower Burdekin Aborigines see J.B. Jukes, Narrative of the Surveying Voyage of 'H.M.S. Fly' (London: T.W. Boone, 1847), 1, pp. 67-73; G. Dalrymple and J. Smith, Report of the Proceedings of the Queensland Government Schooner 'Spitfire' in search of the mouth of the River Burdekin (Brisbane: T.P. Pugh, 1860), p. 29; J. Morrill, Sketch of a residence among the Aborigines of Northern Queensland for seventeen years (Brisbane: Government Printing Office, 1863).

²⁰ See Q.S.A., CLO/N17, pp. 119, 159, 170, 303, 304; CLO/N18, p. 437; CLO/N19, pp. 462, 463, 616, 664-66, 677-79, 738; CLO/N45, p. 1077.

²¹ For details on Robert Town's acquisition of his Lower Burdekin pastoral runs see Dorothy Gibson-Wilde, Gateway to a Golden Land: Townsville to 1884. Studies in North Queensland History No. 7 (Townsville: History Dept., J.C.U., 1984), pp. 25-26.

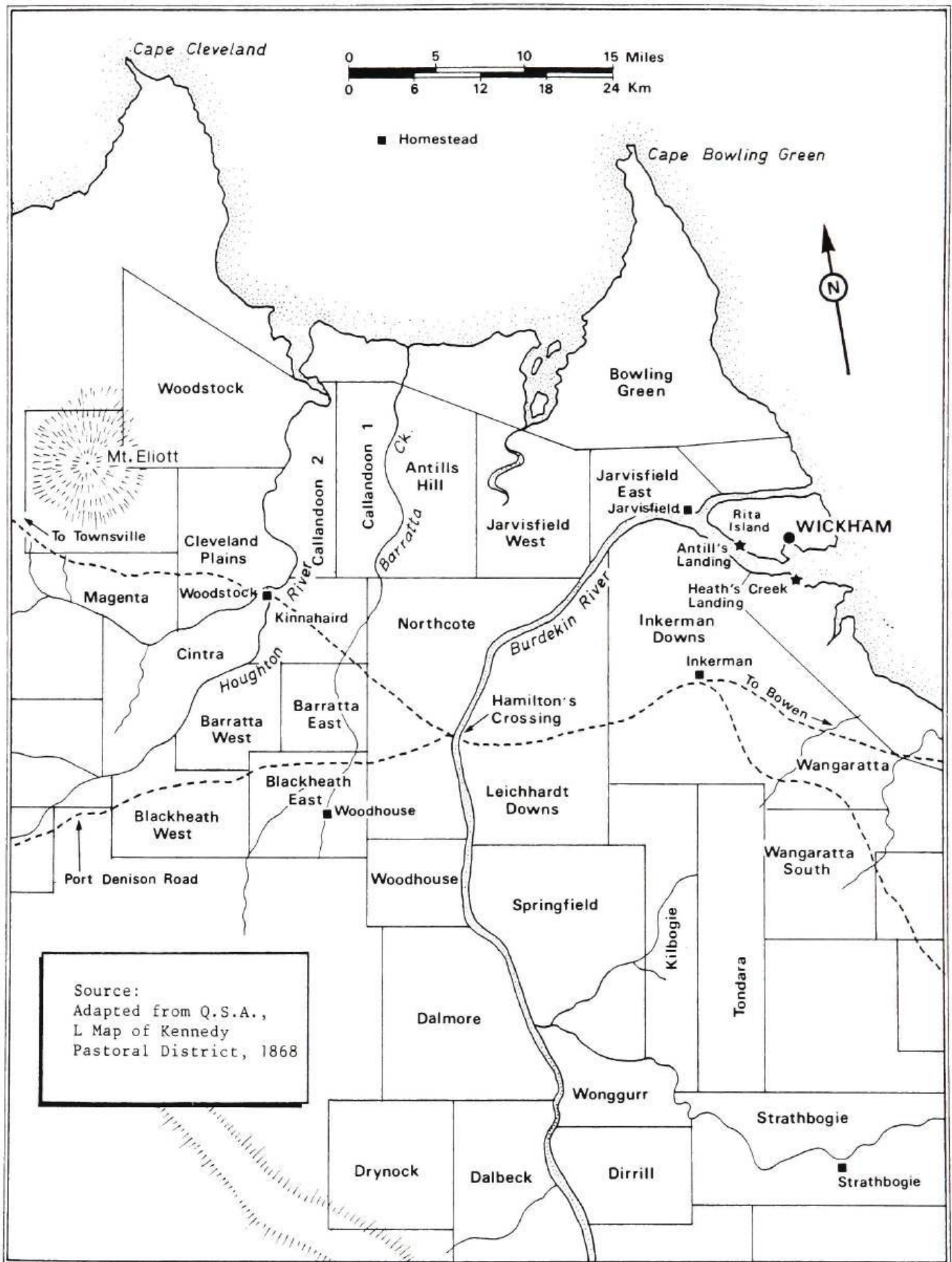


Figure 4.1 The Lower Burdekin Pastoral Runs, 1864

their respective pastoral runs into the mid-1870s.

Despite the continual change in the Lower Burdekin pastoral lessees between 1860 and 1864, some attempts were made at investing capital in the district and establishing a permanent occupation of the region. By 1864 four homesteads - Woodstock, Inkerman, Jarvisfield and Woodhouse - had been established and two small landing places built to receive their goods. Squatters on the Lower Burdekin had their supplies brought by sea from Bowen to the landing places in small steamers and schooners to avoid the overland route.

The landing place on the northern bank of the Burdekin was on Rita Island (at the mouth of the river) and called Antill's Landing (see Figure 4.1). It was established by Edward Spencer Antill to serve his properties.²² Running from the landing place was a track which joined the main road from Bowen that crossed the Burdekin at Hamilton's Crossing (present day site of the town of Clare).²³ According to Antill, several people settled at his landing place as a result of "seeing the Burdekin trade daily increasing".²⁴ However, in early 1864 the Burdekin flooded and the settlers' property at Antill's Landing was damaged. Consequently, these early occupiers of the district asked the government to establish a townsite on the northern bank of the Burdekin that was not liable to inundation.²⁵ Surveyor Clarendon Stuart was despatched to the Lower Burdekin in June 1864 and surveyed two town reserves - one on the northern bank of the Burdekin River, between Jarvisfield Station and the Anabranh, and the other at "The Bluff", a site described as being:

healthy, above all possibility of floods commanding delightful scenery with ample depth of water for steamers to discharge afloat at the bank.²⁶

²² Biographical details on Antill are contained in J.A. Antill, "Major Henry Colden Antill of Picton, N.S.W. (1779-1852)", Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society, 32 (1946): 198.

²³ For a brief history of the small township of Clare see K. Lewis, Clare Centenary: The First 100 Years (Brisbane: Clare Centenary Committee, 1982).

²⁴ E.S. Antill, Jarvisfield Station, to the Hon. Minister for Lands, Brisbane, 18 May 1864, Q.S.A., LWO/A14, In-Letter 1573 of 1864 attached to In-letter 1638 of 1864.

²⁵ S.O. Hubutz, Dept. of Lands and Work, Brisbane, to the Surveyor-General, Brisbane, 13 April 1864, Q.S.A., SUR/A19, In-letter 916 of 1864.

²⁶ P.D.T., 28 May 1864.

Antill objected to the location of the town reserve on the northern bank of the Burdekin, stating that it had cut off his men's huts and a portion of one of his paddocks from his pastoral holdings. He further added that the "upper township" could not exist together with "The Bluff", because of the two, the one commanding the navigation was saleable. Antill also suggested that the township at "The Bluff" be called Wickham, after Captain Wickham who had first explored the mouth of the Burdekin River in 1839.²⁷

The government was persuaded by Antill's arguments for they kept Stuart's site at "The Bluff" and proclaimed a town reserve on Rita Island around the new township of Wickham.²⁸ However, some concern was expressed that the new town site could become isolated at floods and high spring tides due to flooding of the Anabranh.²⁹ The blocks surveyed for the "Upper Township" on Antill's property were abandoned, for a close examination of Figure 4.2 reveals that "cancelled" has been written across them. Even before the proclamation of Wickham and the town reserve, carpenters were erecting dwellings and Messrs Antill's and Allen's wool stores at Wickham. By November 1864 Allen's large receiving store, which could hold over 100 tons of goods and 70 bales of wool, had been completed.³⁰ By March 1865 Wickham also contained two public houses - Emerson's and Rochfort's.³¹

Less is known about the other landing place on the Lower Burdekin at this time - Heath's Creek Landing. Presumably it was established in 1862 or 1863 and served the needs of the settlers on the southern side of the Burdekin River. Certainly by 1868 there was a store at this landing, owned by a Mr. Wills, who had also erected a wharf for the steamers.³²

²⁷ E.S. Antill, Jarvisfield Station, to the Hon. Minister for Lands, Brisbane, 18 May 1864, Q.S.A., LWO/A14, In-letter 1573 of 1864 attached to In-letter 1638 of 1864.

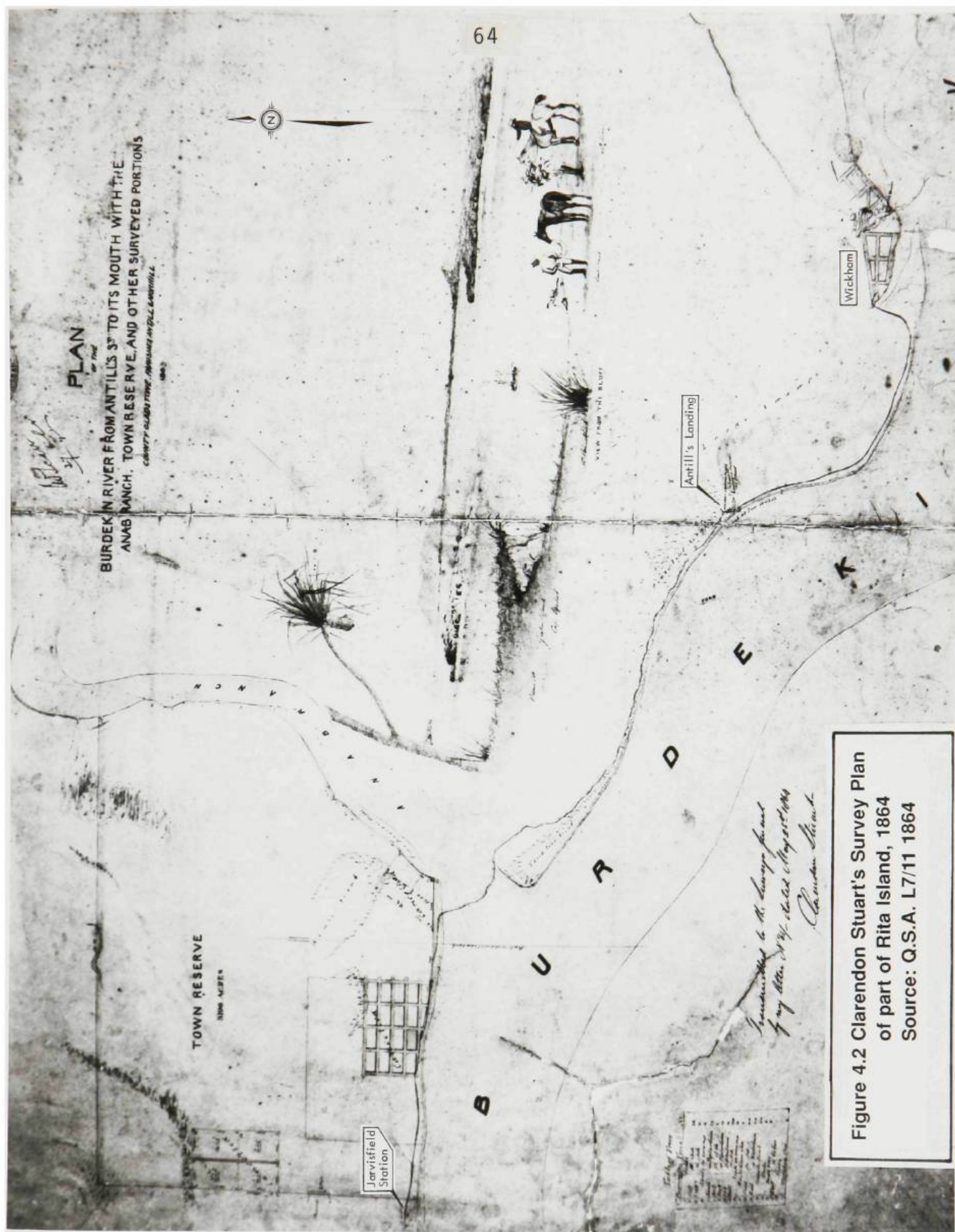
²⁸ Q.G.G., 4 (1864): 666.

²⁹ Crown Lands Commissioner, Bowen, to the Secretary for Lands and Works, Brisbane, 1 August 1864, Q.S.A., LWO/A14, In-letter 1638 of 1864.

³⁰ P.D.T., 13 August 1864; P.D.T., 5 November 1864.

³¹ P.D.T., 18 March 1865.

³² C.B.E., 13 June 1868.



The first pastoralists on the Lower Burdekin initially ran cattle and sheep. Wool was shipped from Wickham to as far away as Sydney.³³ However, the early settlers of the Kennedy Pastoral District, including those on the Lower Burdekin, came to realize that North Queensland was not suited to sheep grazing. Robert Town's Lower Burdekin properties were stocked with sheep until 1869; afterwards they all changed to grazing cattle.³⁴ Indeed, a visitor to Jarvisfield Station had remarked as early as 1865 that:

The country is very sandy and covered with very coarse kangaroo and rib grass that want burning off and feeding down, but I fear can never be made suitable for sheep.³⁵

Other common problems that beset the early pastoralists on the Lower Burdekin and in the Kennedy Pastoral District in general at this time were Aboriginal attacks³⁶ and a lack of close markets for cattle and sheep. In order to alleviate the latter problem, Robert Towns built a boiling down plant at Townsville for the production of tallow and hides. It is reasonable to assume that cattle and sheep from Towns' Lower Burdekin properties supplied his boiling down plant.

According to Pike sugar-cane was first grown on the Lower Burdekin during this period when the pastoral runs were supreme. It was alleged to have been grown at Jarvisfield on Robert Towns' plantation, which was abandoned because of lack of rain.³⁷ Unfortunately, Pike provides no source for where he obtained this information and a search of the surviving newspapers and archival sources for this period revealed nothing to verify or refute Pike's claim. What was located, however, was an 1866 report which stated that a cutter named The Spec had left Townsville on a voyage of exploration to Bowling Green Bay because it was:

³³ P.D.T., 18 June 1864; P.D.T., 25 June 1864; P.D.T., 29 October 1864; P.D.T., 4 February 1865; C.B.E., 27 October 1866; P.D.T., 13 November 1866; C.B.E., 1 December 1866; C.B.E., 8 December 1866; C.B.E., 10 August 1867; C.B.E., 21 May 1870.

³⁴ Bolton, A Thousand Miles Away, p. 40.

³⁵ P.D.T., 17 June 1865.

³⁶ P.D.T., 9 July 1864; C.B.E., 29 June 1867; C.B.E., 21 August 1867; P.D.T., 14 September 1867; C.B.E., 9 November 1867; Commissioner of Police, "Report Upon Tour of Inspection", Q.V.P., 1 (1868): 52; P.D.T., 17 October 1868; P.D.T., 12 June 1869; P.D.T., 18 March 1871; P.D.T., 14 August 1880.

³⁷ Glenville Pike, Queensland Frontier (Brisbane: Rigby Ltd., 1978), p. 195.

the intention of an extensive firm to commence operations in the cultivation of sugar in the delta on the discovery of a suitable spot for the landing place on the banks of a creek accessible to shipping.³⁸

This report is the first document that could be located showing that someone considered the Lower Burdekin lands suitable for sugar cultivation. Perhaps the extensive firm referred to was Towns and Co., seeking to add to the firm's sugar plantation already established at Townsville.³⁹ Whatever the case, the writer of the report also stated that he thought the extensive delta would become "the nucleus of sugar production in Queensland". This prediction, although exaggerated, no doubt showed foresight about the Lower Burdekin's agricultural potential, but it came twenty years too early.

The supremacy of the large pastoral runs on the Lower Burdekin was threatened in the late 1860s, for as mentioned earlier the government in 1868 introduced new land legislation which enabled it to resume sections of pastoral runs for closer settlement. As the Lower Burdekin District was situated under thirty miles from the coast, the region became part of the Settled Districts and the pastoral runs were subjected to resumptions (see Figure 4.3). In 1869 land was resumed from Inkerman Downs, Leichhardt Downs, Jarvisfield East and Jarvisfield West, and in 1870 further resumptions occurred on Antill's Hill, Callandoon No. 1, Callandoon No. 2, Cleveland Plains, Cintra, Woodstock, Woodhouse and the Consolidated run of Northcote.⁴⁰ In all instances - except Bowling Green run which was forfeited to form part of the coast reserve⁴¹ - half the run was resumed by the government. Unfortunately, the number of square miles resumed on each pastoral run according to the archival records does not match in some cases the area which is shown on the maps of resumptions. Consequently, question marks have been placed after the figure indicating the amount of land resumed from Inkerman, Cintra and Leichhardt Downs runs on Figure 4.3. This situation has occurred probably due to poor measurement of the size of each run or

³⁸ P.D.T., 21 July 1866.

³⁹ Towns established a sugar plantation at Townsville in 1866, but it was abandoned in 1870 after a cyclone destroyed the crop and buildings (Gibson-Wilde, Gateway to a Golden Land: Townsville to 1884, pp. 59, 103).

⁴⁰ Q.G.G., 10 (1869): 823,824,1140; Q.G.G., 11 (1870): 23,24,500,501.

⁴¹ Q.S.A., TRE/16, p. 186.

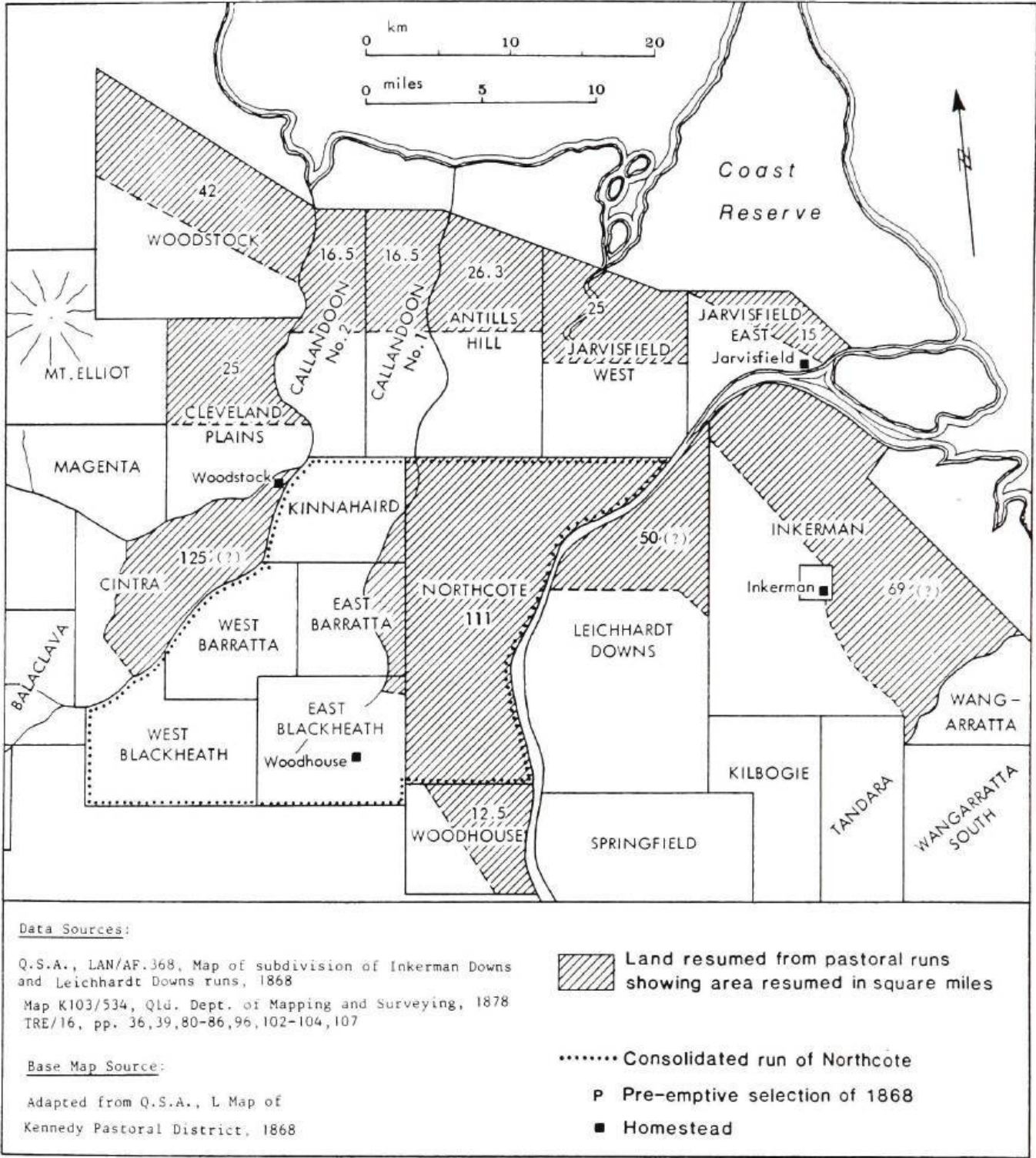


Figure 4.3 Pastoral Resumptions on the Lower Burdekin, 1868

the archival maps showing the resumptions as only rough estimates of what was intended to be resumed - the figure in the government records being the final decision on what was resumed.

Under the 1868 land legislation pastoralists were able to make pre-emptive selections on their properties. Only Robert Towns and Alexander Stuart made a pre-emptive selection on the Lower Burdekin. In 1869 they secured 1,880 acres of first class pastoral land on Inkerman Downs. This block of country protected the station's homestead, kitchen, men's huts, stables, tailing yards, woodsheds, woolyards and woolpress.⁴²

Land selected from the pastoral resumptions on the Lower Burdekin between 1869 and 1875 is shown in Figure 4.4. Three features of this pattern of land selection are apparent. Firstly, of the 395 square miles of country acquired by the government, only 39 square miles was secured by selectors. Most of this land was selected under the conditional clause. Secondly, the blocks were slowly acquired. There was no rush at the beginning of the period to obtain Lower Burdekin land, but a gradual acquisition of the blocks. Thirdly, land selection in this period was contained to the areas around Plantation Creek on the resumed part of Jarvisfield East run and on the southern side of the Lower Burdekin on the resumed portion of Inkerman Downs run. No land was acquired in the lower reaches of the Haughton River or Barratta Creek, despite country being resumed from the pastoral runs in this vicinity.

The reluctance of settlers, especially sugar planters, to secure land on the Lower Burdekin between 1868 and 1876 was probably a result of a combination of three reasons. Firstly, the region received low and variable rainfall. This factor would have been particularly discouraging to planters who could at this time obtain land in areas they perceived as more climatically suitable (e.g. Mackay, Maryborough). Secondly, the Lower Burdekin was isolated, not being served by a readily accessible port. In the mid-1860s Wickham was the district's main port, but by 1872 it was described as having "been long since abandoned",⁴³ probably as a result of the decline in the wool trade once Towns' properties began grazing cattle instead of sheep. Heath's Creek Landing was still operational, for a settler, John Robertson, secured land around Heath's Creek for the sole purpose of monopolizing the landing place; a plan

⁴² Q.S.A., LAN/AG801, Application 31a.

⁴³ C.H. Eden, My Wife and I in Queensland: An Eight Year Experience in the Above Colony with Some Account of Polynesian Labour (London: Longman and Green, 1872), p. 60.

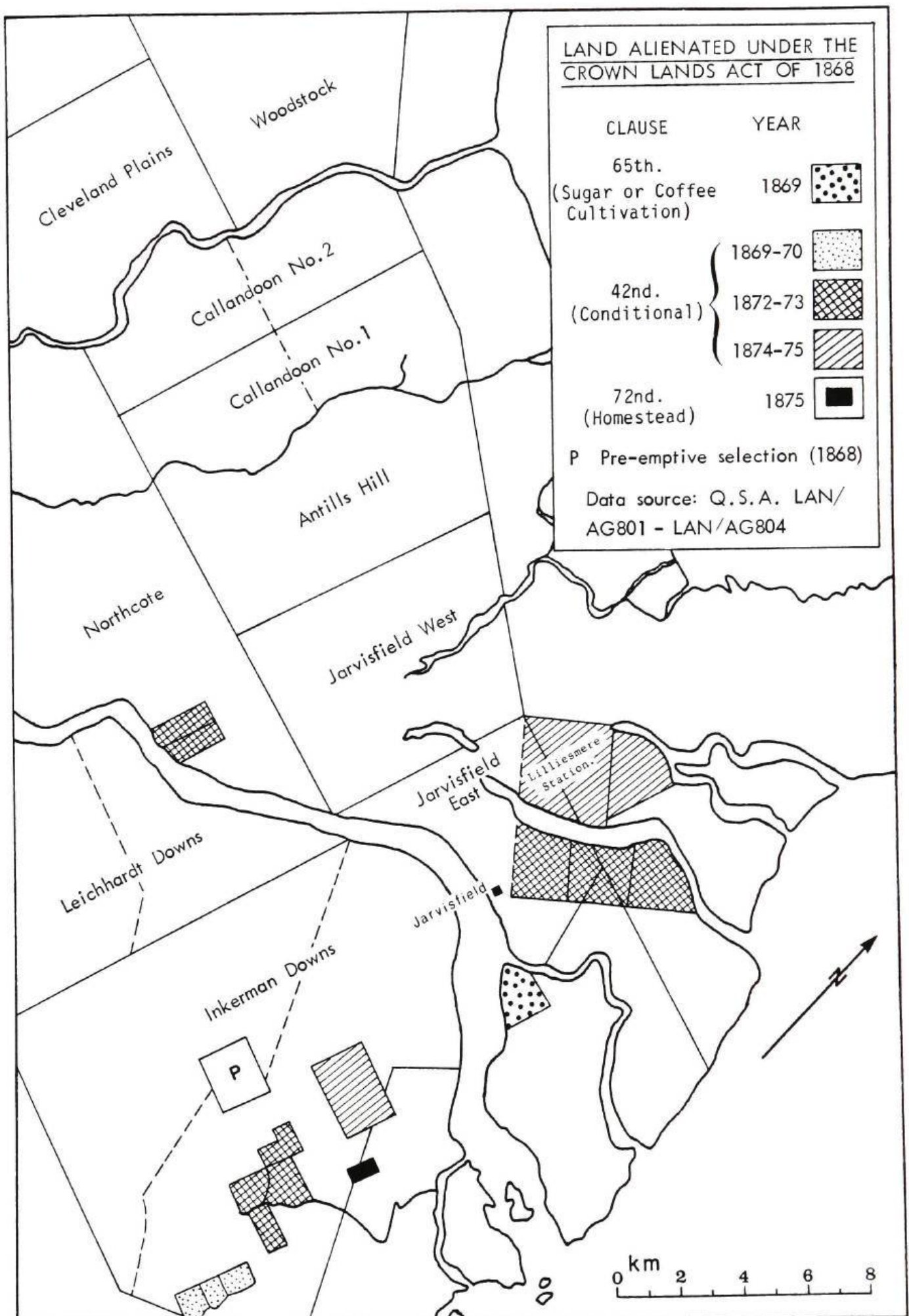


Figure 4.4 Crown Land Selections on the Lower Burdekin, 1869-1876

defeated when the government reserved the site for a landing place.⁴⁴ However, Heath's Creek Landing was not a gazetted port of access, nor on the regular coastal shipping routes. As such, the small coastal steamers called there irregularly, making it difficult for any intending settler to visit the Lower Burdekin or for planters to dispatch their raw sugar to southern markets. Indeed, this lack of suitable port facilities was to be a problem for the Lower Burdekin region until it was linked to Townsville by railway in 1901. The third reason which also most likely contributed to the lack of interest in the Lower Burdekin lands at this time was the establishment of gold diggings at Charters Towers, Ravenswood and the Palmer River.⁴⁵ Any settler intending to secure land in North Queensland in the 1870s may have been lured to the goldfields.

Although the 1868 land legislation aimed to encourage closer settlement and agricultural expansion, its intent fell far short of being achieved on the Lower Burdekin, despite the abundance of land that was resumed from the pastoral runs. Few inroads had been made into the Lower Burdekin pastoral runs by 1876 and pastoralism remained the dominant regional land use. However, there was some continued interest shown in the region's suitability for sugar cultivation. In 1869 Alexander Stuart selected a sugar or coffee lease on Rita Island (see Figure 4.4), yet he found that the area flooded and in a letter of complaint to the government he declared that his selection was "practically useless". Stuart ceased to pay the rent and the lease on his block lapsed.⁴⁶ Evidence of further interest in the Lower Burdekin's sugar growing potential can be seen in the mid-1870s when John Scott, the lessee of Norham Estate, established a small paddock of sugar-cane on his property in 1875.⁴⁷ It is reasonable to assert that Scott was testing to see if the crop could be successfully grown in the region. A small patch of sugar-cane was also alleged to have been grown on Lilliesmere Station in the

⁴⁴ Land Commissioner, Bowen, to the Under Secretary of Public Lands, Brisbane, 8 October 1873, Q.S.A., LAN/AG801, Application 28, In-letter 7728 of 1873.

⁴⁵ Bolton, *A Thousand Miles Away*, pp. 44-61.

⁴⁶ Alexander Stuart, Sydney, to the Crown Lands Commissioner, Brisbane, 11 December 1872, Q.S.A., LAN/AG801, Application 31B, In-letter 93765 of 1872.

⁴⁷ Sworn Oath by Michael Britt, 18 March 1875, Q.S.A., LAN/AG802, Application 70a.

mid-1870s,⁴⁸ although a detailed list of the improvements to the property in 1878 makes no mention of its existence.⁴⁹ Whatever the case, the overall amount of sugar-cane grown on the Lower Burdekin in the mid-1870s was obviously quite small, for it does not rate a mention in the official statistics (see Table 4.1). Nevertheless, the above evidence suggests in the 1870s there was a continued interest, albeit small, in the region's suitability for sugar cultivation.

4.5 CONCLUSIONS

Pastoral runs were established on the Lower Burdekin in the early 1860s. In 1876 they continued to dominate the region; closer settlement and agriculture had made little headway. The suitability of the region for sugar-cane cultivation, had been recognized, yet the colony's planters had declined to obtain selections in the district, despite the encouraging conditions of the 1868 land legislation. It is reasonable to assert that this reluctance to invest in sugar-cane cultivation on the Lower Burdekin was a result of its poor port facilities and variable rainfall creating the impression that it was a marginal district for the crop, when compared to the more accessible and prosperous regions such as Mackay and Maryborough where considerable expansion in the industry occurred in the early 1870s. However, as will be seen in the next chapter, the high prices for raw sugar and the abundance of cheap land made available under the 1876 land legislation encouraged the colony's planters to take the risk associated with growing sugar-cane on the Lower Burdekin.

⁴⁸ Planter and Farmer, October 1883, p. 632.

⁴⁹ A.C. Macmillan and A. Brook, "Proof of Fullfillment of Conditions of Selections under The Crown Lands Alienation Act of 1868, 27 June 1878", Q.S.A., LAN/AG803, Application 143a.

CHAPTER 5

THE PLANTATION PERIOD: 1877-1891

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Following the opening of the Lower Burdekin lands to purchase under the conditions of the Crown Lands Alienation Act of 1876, there was an upsurge in the number of settlers in the district. Included amongst the settlers were the region's first sugar planters, who set about forming their plantations, erecting mills and building tramways throughout the Lower Burdekin during the early 1880s. However, a drop in the world sugar price in 1884 caused the newly established Lower Burdekin sugar industry to enter a period of contraction and depression that did not end until the early 1890s. This initial phase in sugar growing on the Lower Burdekin will now be examined, beginning with a review of the broader economic and political developments which affected the Queensland sugar industry during the late 1870s and 1880s.

5.2 QUEENSLAND'S SUGAR INDUSTRY, 1877-1891: AN OVERVIEW

As mentioned earlier, the Queensland sugar industry in 1875-76 suffered a period of contraction due to the 'rust crisis'. However, by 1879 the colony's sugar industry had recovered from the 'rust' outbreaks. This recovery was attributable to a general economic upturn, the election of a government within which planter interests were influential and the cultivation of rust-susceptible cane varieties.¹ These factors, in conjunction with the opening of new lands to settlement, particularly in the north of the colony, led to a period of rapid growth in sugar growing in Queensland.

In 1879 the majority of Queensland's acreage under cane and its sugar mills were located in the south of the colony. During the next five years, however, sugar-cane was grown and mills established for the first time in several northern regions, including the Lower Burdekin. Cane was also cropped again at localities where it had ceased to be grown during the early 1870s (e.g. Bowen, Rockhampton) and there was an expansion in the acreage under cane in regions where the crop had been

¹ Adrian Graves, "Crisis and Change in the Queensland Sugar Industry" in Crisis and Change in the International Sugar Economy 1860-1914, Eds. W. Albert and A. Graves, (Norwich: ISC Press, 1984), p. 266.

grown continuously since the late 1860s (e.g. Mackay, Logan, Maryborough) (see Table 5.1). Overall, between 1879 and 1884 the acreage under cane in Queensland nearly quadrupled and the operational mills in the colony increased from 70 in 1879 to 169 in 1884.²

The expansion in sugar growing in Queensland in the early 1880s strained the ability of recruiters to meet the industry's demand for Melanesian labourers, especially as they faced competition from recruiters for the Fijian sugar industry which was also rapidly expanding.³ Consequently, recruiting voyages from Queensland in the early 1880s became considerably longer and the passage money charged by recruiters climbed steeply.⁴ Nevertheless, during the years 1881-1883 Melanesian recruitment to Queensland reached its highest.⁵ However, despite such record recruitment of 'Kanakas' and the introduction in 1880 of measures which restricted indentured Melanesians to employment in the colony's sugar industry,⁶ Queensland's sugar planters were forced to augment their labour force by employing Aborigines and importing indentured Chinese, Cingalese, Javanese and Malays.⁷

The presence of over 8,000 Melanesians in Queensland by 1883 resulted in social problems, including a soaring mortality rate amongst

² For further details on the expansion in Queensland's sugar industry between 1878 and 1884 see Bolton, A Thousand Miles Away, pp. 135-139; Fitzgerald, From the Dreaming to 1915, pp. 180-183; Dorothy Jones, Trinity Phoenix Cairns: Cairns and District Centenary Committee, 1976), Sugar Saga: A History of the Sugar Industry in the Bundaberg District (Bundaberg: Bundaberg Sugar Co. Ltd., 1983), pp. 14-24.

³ On the expansion in Fiji's sugar industry in the early 1880s see Michael Moynagh, Brown or White? A History of the Fiji Sugar Industry 1873-1973, Pacific Research Monograph No. 5, (Canberra: A.N.U. Press, 1981), pp. 13-15.

⁴ Shlomowitz, "The Search for Institutional Equilibrium in Queensland's Sugar Industry, 1884-1913", pp. 100-101.

⁵ Moore, Kanaka, p. 28.

⁶ Fitzgerald, From the Dreaming to 1915, p. 247.

⁷ Bolton, A Thousand Miles Away, pp. 144-45; Graves, "Crisis and Change in the Queensland Sugar Industry", pp. 269-273; Saunders, Workers in Bondage, pp. 66-67.

Table 5.1. Distribution of Sugar-Cane Acreage, Queensland, 1879-1891

Region	1879	1880	1881	1882	1883	1884	1885	1886	1887	1888	1889	1890	1891
Cook ¹	7	16	534	1523	143	741	817	934	440	438	567	550	0
Cairns/Mossman	-	-	-	-	2350	4129	2361	2148	1557	1621	1500	1479	955
Herbert/Mourilyan	473	622	1095	2416	4138	4779	8138	8911	8385	8554	9941	10774	10027
Lower Burdekin	0	0	153	2040	3572	3629	3971	3591	3703	2050	2545	2937	3610
Proserpine/Bowen	6	19	12	38	254	376	278	20	0	0	0	2	2
Mackay	7440	7880	10629	15210	17039	19320	18532	16165	17422	15861	15729	15791	14397
Rockhampton	6	38	47	152	207	303	330	247	345	468	601	543	580
Bundaberg	738	1395	4195	6028	7874	10747	12381	12918	12794	13088	14339	14875	17008
Maryborough	4885	4858	4332	6261	5293	5928	5607	4651	4203	3362	2890	2440	2553
Brisbane	1214	1946	2468	2546	2204	2400	1934	1266	650	554	607	430	389
Logan	2837	3407	3597	3866	4684	5220	4642	3108	2302	1333	998	1039	1371
Total	17606	20181	27062	40080	47758	57572	58991	53959	51801	47329	49717	50860	50892

Note: 1. The Cook region until 1882 incorporated the Cairns/Mossman districts.

Source: Queensland Statistical Registers, 1879-1891

'Kanakas' on the plantations and outbreaks of racial violence.⁸ Hostility towards the Melanesians was also growing. Arguments were advanced that these foreign people of another race and culture would undermine the model of British civilization that was being established in Australia. In addition, white workers and many townspeople, backed by the Liberal politicians, saw the Melanesians as an economic threat. 'White' workers were beginning to ask for protection of their labour, to stop themselves being undercut by cheap servile labour. Political considerations also arose in opposition to the importation of Melanesian labourers. Liberal supporters sought to challenge the power of the big planters who tended to align themselves with other conservative interests, in particular the pastoralists. The wealthy planters, utilizing cheap labour, could be reduced by depriving them of Melanesians. Instead, 'white' farmers on small farms should provide the backbone of the sugar industry.⁹

The above matters were central to the September 1883 election campaign which ended in a revitalized Liberal party led by S.W. Griffith defeating McIlwraith's conservatives. Although Griffith had campaigned to reduce the presence of coloured labour in Queensland, it took until August 1885 before the government introduced legislation which declared that no licenses to bring Melanesians to Queensland would be issued after 31 December 1890. Furthermore, it ordered that the employment of Melanesians in the sugar industry was to cease three years later. Thereafter the industry was to be manned only by Europeans ('whites'). Griffith hoped that the introduction of Italian workers would ease the anticipated labour shortages and assist the growers during the transition to 'white' workers only.¹⁰

To assist the colony's small farmers, the Liberals in 1884 introduced new land legislation which provided further cheap land for agricultural purposes (see Chapter 5.3 for further details). In addition, to

⁸ For a discussion on this topic, see Bolton, *A Thousand Miles Away*, pp. 149-150; Moore, *Kanaka*, p. 160; Kay Saunders, "The Black Scourge....". Racial responses towards Melanesians in Colonial Queensland", in *Exclusion, Exploitation and Extermination in Colonial Queensland*, Eds. Ray Evans et al. (Sydney: A.N.Z. Book Company, 1975), pp. 181-191, 205-207; Kay Saunders, "The Pacific Islander Hospitals in Colonial Queensland: The Failure of Liberal Principles", *Journal of Pacific History*, 11 (1976): 28-50.

⁹ Johnston, *The Call of the Land*, pp. 59-60; Saunders, "The Black Scourge...", p. 153.

¹⁰ Johnston, *The Call of the Land*, p. 63.

encourage the small growers of sugar-cane, the Crown in 1884 appointed a Royal Commission to investigate which localities within the colony would be suitable sites for the erection of government-funded central mills. These new mills would help small growers overcome their dependence on the planters' mills. The Crown's support for central mills was a bold move, for two of the four factories built in the 1870s by planters intending to purchase all of their cane from small farmers had failed by 1880 and two more were in the hands of the bank.¹¹ Nevertheless, in 1884 at least two mills in Queensland - one at Mackay and one in the Logan district - successfully operated as central mills.¹² Undoubtedly the Crown was confident that it could encourage the expansion in the number of central mills in Queensland by providing a lead, especially as small growers had previously called for a government funded central milling system. These demands derived from the subordinate role the small farmers held in the sugar industry, for they were dependent upon the mill owner to buy and crush their cane.¹³

The 1885 Royal Commission interviewed farmers in the majority of Queensland's sugar growing regions. It was found in the more recently settled portions of the colony, particularly in the north, that many willing settlers were unable to give the security available for repayment on any advance made by the government, for they had not yet obtained the freehold title over their land. In addition, the farmers in the Herbert, Mossman and Burdekin districts rejected the government's offer if accompanied by the condition that the mills only accept cane grown by 'white' labour. Only the small growers at Mackay were prepared to accept the Crown's conditions. Accordingly, the Royal Commission duly recommended the establishment of two central mills in the district - one at Racecourse and the other at North Eton. At each of these centres a group of farmers agreed to mortgage their lands to the government for

¹¹ Godfrey Linge, *Industrial Awakening. A Geography of Australian Manufacturing 1788-1890*. (Canberra: A.N.U. Press, 1979), p. 690.

¹² W.H. Groom et al., "Report of the Sugar Industry Commission", *Q.V.P.*, 4 (1889): 64; Kenneth Manning, *In Their Own Hands* (Mackay: Farleigh Co-operative Sugar Milling Assoc. Ltd., 1983), p. 86.

¹³ Graves, "Crisis and Change in Queensland's Sugar Industry", p. 277.

advances of just over £20,000.¹⁴ Both of the new mills had their first trial crushings in 1888.

Griffith's decision in 1885 to end the recruitment of Melanesians to Queensland after 1890 coincided with a sudden decline in the world price of sugar from £380 in 1883 to £260 in 1884, caused by a massive dumping of beet sugar on the British and American markets.¹⁵ The combination of these two factors plunged the Queensland sugar industry into another depression. Plantations and mills closed and the acreage under cane declined. Indeed, in 1888 the area under cane was 10,000 acres less than 1884 (see Table 5.1). The northern planters blamed Griffith's Melanesian policy for their misfortunes and joined the call for northern separation.¹⁶

The government reacted to the growers' misfortune by appointing a Royal Commission in 1888 to inquire into the problems faced by the industry. The Royal Commission concluded that the depressed conditions were caused by a combination of the following factors: the unnecessarily large areas held by planters who only cultivated a small portion but paid rates and interest on the whole; the indebtedness of many planters and farmers who were operating on borrowed capital bearing a high rate of interest; the effects of droughts; the low world sugar price; and the uncertainty over the industry's future labour requirements.¹⁷ In addition, the Royal Commission discovered that the entry of small farmers into the industry was still not advanced. As a result of these findings, the Royal Commissioners recommended the continued recruitment of Melanesian labourers under government control, support of irrigation, the erection of further central mills, the break-up of large estates and reciprocal tariff arrangements with other Australian colonies.¹⁸

¹⁴ W. Hodgkinson, "Report on Central Sugar Mills", Q.V.P., 2 (1886): 7.

¹⁵ Graves, "Crisis and Change in Queensland's Sugar Industry", p. 274; A. Lowndes, South Pacific Enterprise: The Colonial Sugar Refining Co. Ltd. (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1956), p. 443.

¹⁶ Christine Doran, Separation in Townsville, 1884 to 1894: "We Should Govern Ourselves". Studies in North Queensland History No. 4 (Townsville: History Dept., J.C.U., 1981), pp. 74-76.

¹⁷ Linge, Industrial Awakening, p. 692.

¹⁸ W.H. Groom et al., "Report of the Sugar Industry Commission Appointed to Inquire into the General Condition of the Sugar Industry, etc.", Q.V.P., 4 (1889): 62-75.

The 1885 Royal Commission's recommendations required the Crown to play a larger role in the affairs of the sugar industry than previously had been necessary. Further state intervention, however, did not occur until the early 1890s. In the meantime, those planters still involved in the industry began to realize that they could face labour shortages after 1890 due to the cessation of Melanesian recruitment and more importantly that the plantation system was no longer favoured by the Crown. Accordingly, some planters tried recruiting Italians, others, particularly in the north, increased their importation of Asian labour, while the owners of Mourilyan plantation in the Johnstone district unsuccessfully attempted to employ English and Irish immigrants.¹⁹ Other planters, however, began to subdivide their plantations into smaller blocks for sale or for rental. This strategy aimed to encourage the expansion in the number of small cane growers and to increase the population of 'white' labourers in sugar growing regions. In addition, by selling their lands, planters could reduce the capitalization on their estates and generate funds which would then be used to encourage and support small farmers and update and improve the efficiency of their mills.²⁰

Against this background of rapid expansion and then depression in Queensland's sugar industry in the 1880s, it is now possible to explore the growth of the industry on the Lower Burdekin. This discussion will commence with an examination of the pastoral resumptions and subsequent land sales that occurred on the Lower Burdekin between 1877 and 1890. Particular emphasis will be placed on identifying the areas chosen by the sugar planters, for these blocks became the district's sugar plantations.

5.3 THE ARRIVAL OF THE PLANTERS AND FARMERS

5.3.1 Introduction

Upon assuming government in 1874, the Liberals - who advocated closer settlement and agricultural development - sought to recover from the squatters the bulk of the land intended for agricultural settlement

¹⁹ Bolton, *A Thousand Miles Away*, pp. 201-202; Dorothy Jones, *Hurricane Lamps and Blue Umbrellas* (Cairns: Bolton Printers, 1973), p. 154; Jones, *Trinity Phoenix*, p. 360; Kerr, *Pioneer Pageant*, p. 126.

²⁰ Shlomowitz, "The Search for Institutional Equilibrium in Queensland's Sugar Industry, 1884-1913", pp. 113-114.

that they had been able to gain under the provisions of the Crown Lands Alienation Act of 1868. Accordingly, after great difficulty, the Liberals were able to introduce the Crown Lands Alienation Act of 1876 to replace the Crown Lands Alienation Act of 1868 with its amendments of 1872 and 1875. Once again land was resumed from pastoral leases to provide blocks for agricultural settlement. Crown lands continued to be classified as before (i.e. agricultural, first class or second class pastoral) and selectors could acquire a maximum of 5,120 acres under the conditional purchase sections. However, purchase and improvement conditions were made more difficult to prevent dummying.²¹

According to Roberts there was no doubt that the 1876 land legislation led to much settlement in Queensland. "In almost every district settlement is advancing," said a report of 1881; huge sugar areas were taken up and there was a rapid influx of population.²² However, Taylor concluded that:

a large proportion of the selectors after 1876 took up their land for speculative purposes or eventually gave up the struggle to farm it successfully; in each case they sold to the nearest squatter once they had obtained the title.²³

Nevertheless, Roberts suggests that the 1876 land legislation, while being far from a solution to the problem of how to make land available for closer settlement, was yet a better Act than its predecessors.²⁴

Following the election of Griffith's Liberal government in 1884 the colony's land legislation underwent a review. As a result of this review the 1876 land laws were replaced by the Crown Lands Act of 1884. This legislation was a consolidating measure to tidy up the clutter of almost annual amendments to the lands laws, and a revolutionary step forward. As in previous land bills, the 1884 legislation made provision for pastoral runs to be divided into two sections: one to be called the "resumed

²¹ Details on the 1876 land legislation were summarized from Bernays, Queensland Politics During Sixty Years, pp. 317-318; Roberts, History of Australian Land Settlement, pp. 262-265; Taylor, "Political Attitudes and Land Policy in Queensland", pp. 253-255.

²² Roberts, History of Australian Land Settlement, p. 263, quoting Q.P.D., 34 (1881): 2. See also T.A. Coghlan, Labour and Industry in Australia, Vol. 3 (Melbourne: Oxford Uni. Pres, 1918), pp. 1373-74.

²³ Taylor, "Political Attitudes and Land Policy in Queensland", p. 254.

²⁴ Roberts, History of Australian Land Settlement, pp. 321-322.

part" and available to depasturing rights upon application by the existing lessees or open to selection; the remainder to be available to the lessee for a further ten or fifteen year lease, depending upon under which Act the pastoralist had acquired his land. In the case of two or more conterminous runs being held by the same pastoral tenant, all the runs were to be treated as one run; termed a consolidated run.

Under the 1884 legislation, however, land was no longer classified as agricultural or pastoral, nor offered under conditional or homestead clauses, but divided into three classes - agricultural farms for large farmers, grazing farms for those who combined stock-raising and agriculture and still larger 'grazing leases' or 'occupation licenses' for small squatters.

Leases over agricultural farms were extended to fifty years, with the right of converting into freehold after ten years. Small agricultural farms not exceeding 160 acres could be made freehold subject to the selector performing five years continuous personal residence on the selection. The largest area allowed to be held as an agricultural farm was 1,280 acres. The grazing farm class of holding had a term of lease fixed at thirty years, subject to periodic re-assessment. Both agricultural and grazing farms were required to be fenced within five and three years respectively from the commencement of terms, but the selector of an agricultural farm could, instead of fencing his selection, erect improvements equal in value to the cost of an enclosing fence. Occupation licenses were issued on a yearly basis.²⁵

The broad policy embodied in the 1884 Act, argues Hughes, was the avoidance of the general alienation of public lands to speculators, for it was feared that land would then have to be repurchased for public needs when development of railways and roads had made closer settlement possible. As such, the principle of leasehold would be used to maintain the Crown's supply of land so as to meet demands for land. There would be a three-stage progression: first, pastoral leases for a fixed term but without restriction as to area which would be attractive to big capitalists; second, when the big pastoralists were no longer required the

²⁵ Summarized from details in Roberts, History of Australian Land Settlement, pp. 317-18; Taylor, "Political Attitudes and Land Policy in Queensland, 1868-1894", p. 260; Bernays, Queensland Politics During Sixty Years, pp. 321-324; and Coghlan, Labour and Industry in Australia, pp. 1375-1379.

land would be broken into grazing selections; finally, when required there would be further subdivision into smaller farms at which stage freehold would be granted. Closer settlement, therefore, would be promoted through the selection of both agricultural farms and grazing farm selection.²⁶

Despite the intent of the 1884 Act, it was less successful in facilitating further closer settlement in Queensland than the 1876 land legislation. A pastoral recession caused by droughts, pests such as rabbits and ticks and falling wool prices, combined with a depression in the sugar industry, ensured there was only a limited demand for the land made available for selection in the late 1880s. Consequently, state revenue fell drastically, especially as lower payments were received for leases compared with what the Crown had been receiving previously from the sale of land. Under pressure, especially from pastoral interests as they went into a financial decline, the government felt obliged to respond with concessions and a watering-down of the overall intent of the legislation.²⁷ By 1891 unconditional selections had been introduced, enabling anyone, with the exception of aliens, to secure land. Leases on unconditional selections were fixed at twenty years and contained neither improvement nor residential clauses. Those selectors of 1884, hampered by restrictions, were allowed to transfer their tenure to the new form.²⁸

By the early 1890s it was realized that the Liberals' 1884 land legislation had failed in most respects. It had not brought about an agricultural revolution - the sudden emergence of a society of small farmers did not eventuate. Indeed, according to Roberts "hunger and stock diseases stalked rampant" where the Liberals envisaged "hordes of flourishing settlers".²⁹ Nevertheless, as will be seen in the following chapters, successive governments throughout the 1890s and 1900s continued to pursue policies that aimed at closer settlement and the creation of a landed yeomanry.

²⁶ Colin Hughes, "Land and Settlement", in *Labor in Power*, Eds. D.J. Murphy et al. (Brisbane: Uni. of Queensland Press, 1980), p. 223.

²⁷ Johnston, *The Call of the Land*, p. 55.

²⁸ Bernays, *Queensland Politics During Sixty Years*, p. 324.

²⁹ Roberts, *History of Australian Land Settlement*, p. 317.

Within the legislative framework described above it is now possible to examine the land openings that occurred on the Lower Burdekin between 1877 and 1891 and assess the success of the Crown's closer settlement policies within the district.

5.3.2 Pastoral Subdivisions and Land Purchases, 1877-1885

In March 1877 a proclamation gazetted that all the country in the settled districts of Kennedy that had not been obtained under the Crown Lands Alienation Act of 1868 could be secured under Conditional or Homestead selection at 5 s. per acre, with 5,120 acres being the maximum area obtainable.³⁰ Following this proclamation interest in acquiring the Lower Burdekin lands remained moderate. Between 1877 and 1879 just over 35,000 acres in the district were secured from the Crown. Although this amount was 10,000 acres more than the area that had been chosen between 1868 and 1876 (see Table 5.2), much of Jarvisfield East and Jarvisfield West runs and the northern half of Inkerman Downs run remained unselected (see Figure 5.1). The Land Commissioner at Bowen,³¹ however, confidently predicted in 1879 that all this country would soon be selected.³²

Table 5.2. Crown Land Selection on the Lower Burdekin, 1868-1891

YEAR	1868-76	1877-79	1880	1881	1882	1883-85	1886-88	1889-91
ACRES	25151	35149	47328	31098	39794	9421	14697	1017

Source: Assembled and calculated on the basis of selection details contained in Q.S.A., LAN/P5, LAN/P490 and LAN/P494.

In February 1880 further lands on the Lower Burdekin were opened for selection, when a Government Gazette notice proclaimed the remaining 9,600 acres of Jarvisfield East run and 1,600 acres on Jarvisfield West run able to be secured under conditional and homestead selection, and that

³⁰ Q.G.G., 20 (1877): 487.

³¹ Up until February 1885 the Lower Burdekin was contained in the Bowen Land Agent's District. From March 1885 onwards the Lower Burdekin was situated in the Townsville Land Agent's District (Q.G.G., 36 (1885): 690, 697).

³² Extract from the Report of Mr. Waldron Burrowes, Land Commissioner, Bowen, Q.V.P., 2 (1880): 561.

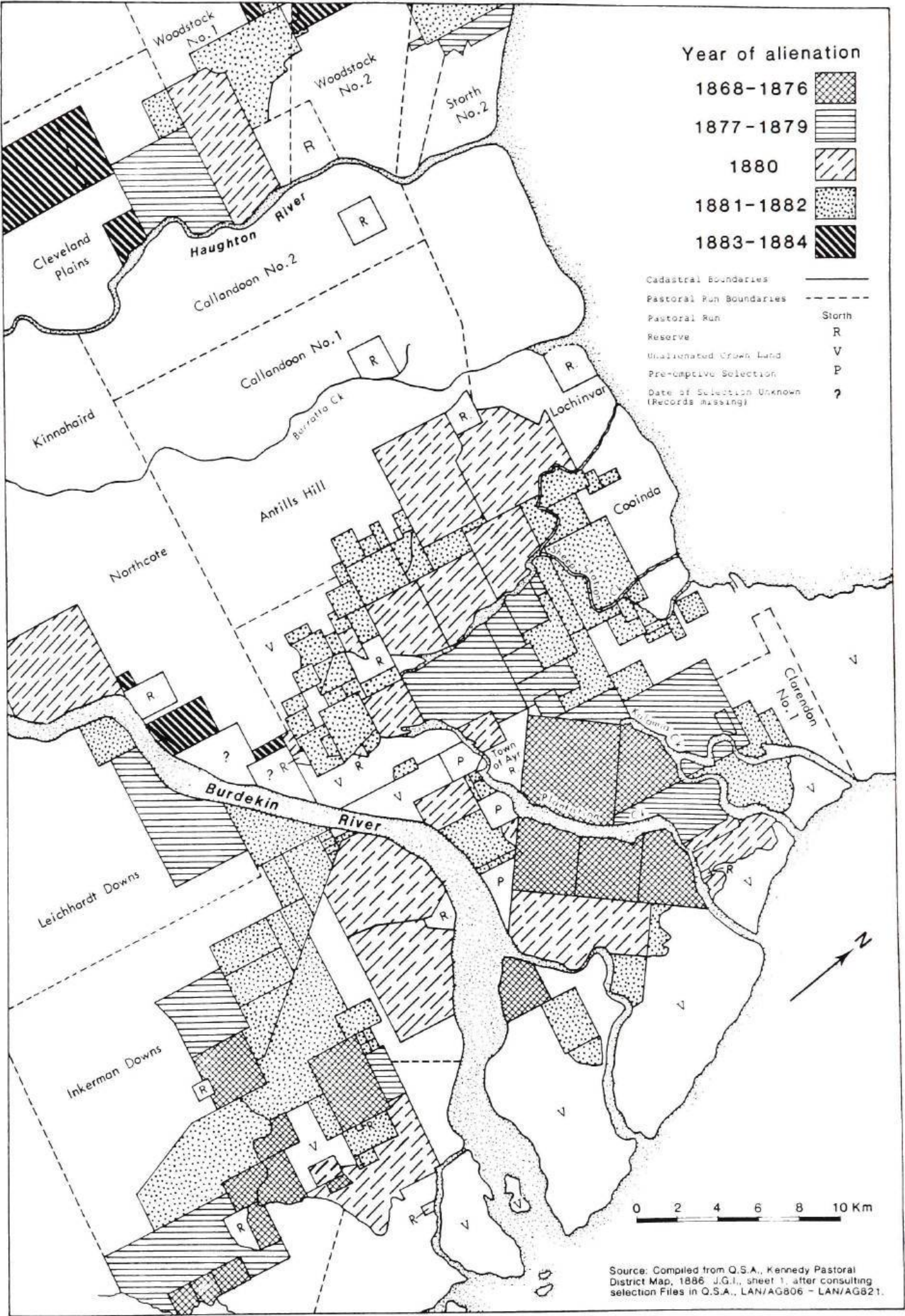


Figure 5.1. Crown Land Selections on the Lower Burdekin, 1877-1884.

the maximum area to be selected was not to exceed 1,280 acres.³³ Some of this country plus other blocks totalling nearly 47,500 acres were secured by the end of 1880. Demand continued with just over 31,000 acres and 40,000 acres being selected in 1881 and 1882 respectively (see Table 5.2).

Interest in the Lower Burdekin lands abated after 1882, with only 9,000 acres being alienated from the Crown (see Table 5.2). Despite such reduced land sales, the Crown in late 1885 proclaimed open to selection 4,750 acres of the former Jarvisfield East and Jarvisfield West runs which had remained unsecured at the end of 1884.³⁴ Covering an area south of the town of Ayr between Plantation Creek and the Burdekin River (see Figure 5.2), it is difficult to explain why this country, so suited to agriculture, was not chosen between 1880 and 1884. However, once opened to selection again as thirty-two blocks ranging from 40 to 300 acres in size, this country according to the Townsville Land Commissioner was "much sought after".³⁵ Most of it was acquired by small selectors, who had not secured land between 1878 and 1884. An examination of the thirty-six names of selectors who were successful in securing the land in this area between 1885 and 1888 revealed that only five had acquired land on the Lower Burdekin prior to 1884. Several of the new settlers were local businessmen who had established themselves in Ayr (e.g. Benjamin Bros., storekeepers; G.G. Kann, saddler; and W. Lynch, hotel owner) or plantation workers (e.g. James Hillier, Albert Seldon, John Kelly, Thomas Kelly, William Johns, Samuel McCluskey).³⁶

5.3.3 Pastoral Subdivisions and Land Purchases, 1885-1891

In 1885 the government began to implement sections of the Crown Lands Act of 1884. A Dividing Officer was appointed for the Townsville

³³ Q.G.G., 26 (1880): 210.

³⁴ Q.G.G., 37 (1885): 862.

³⁵ Extract from the Annual Report of Mr. F. Goodfellow, Land Commissioner, Townsville, Q.V.P., 3 (1887): 776.

³⁶ For a list of local businessmen on the Lower Burdekin see Pugh's Almanac (Country Directory), 1887, p. 49. Plantation workers were established from the lists of employees at Pioneer Estate (see J.C.U., PMR/CJI), from the application forms to select the land (which often recorded the residence of the applicant), and from the Crown Land Ranger reports on the selector's holding (see Q.S.A. LAN/DF4819-LAN/DF4828).

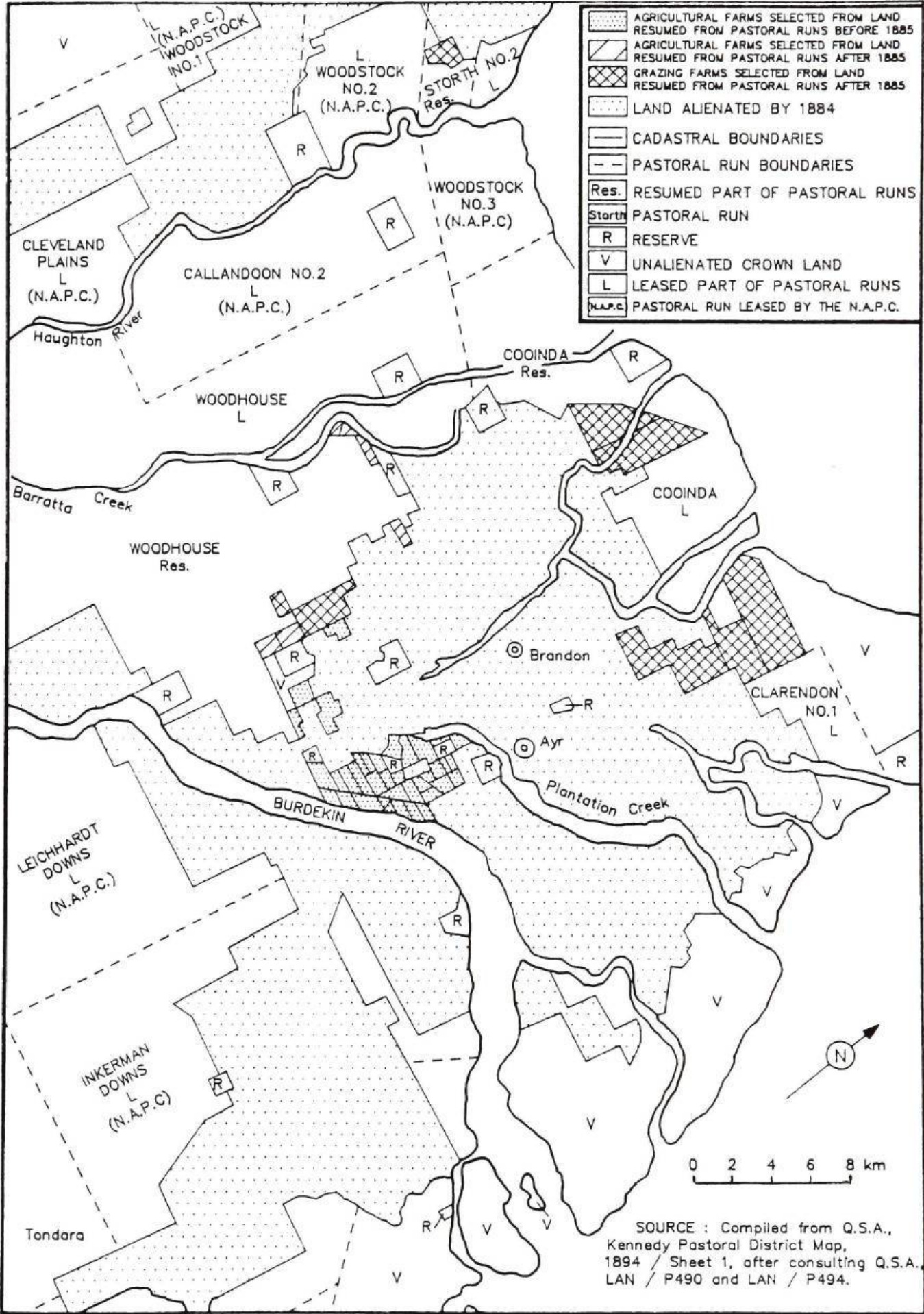


Figure 5.2 Types of Crown Land Selections on the Lower Burdekin, 1885 – 1891

Land Agent's District and he began the task of determining which sections on the individual or consolidated pastoral runs were suitable for closer settlement and thus liable for resumption. On the Lower Burdekin, many of the surviving pastoral runs were conterminous and leased by one pastoralist and as such were treated as consolidated runs (see Figure 5.3).

In the western half of the Lower Burdekin, occupying both sides of the Haughton River, was the Woodstock Consolidation, leased by the N.A.P.C. The Dividing Officer considered most of the Woodstock Consolidation "unsuitable for agriculture", so the section resumed was further inland around Majors Creek (not shown in Figure 5.3).³⁷

Most of the land stretching from Barratta Creek, westwards to the edge of the alienated land and up river along the Burdekin comprised the Woodhouse Consolidation. The Crown decided to resume in 1886 the country closest to the lands alienated by 1884 (see Figure 5.3). Such a division of the Woodhouse Consolidation allowed the pastoral lessees to retain the section on which the Head Station and other sundry improvements had been constructed, while the resumed country was considered more suitable for public requirements as it had river frontage and adjoined the proposed resumed portion of Inkerman Consolidated run.³⁸

The remaining unalienated country on the southern side of the Burdekin River formed the leased part of the Inkerman Consolidation, also leased by the N.A.P.C. The country on this consolidation was considered unsuitable for agriculture as it was "poorly watered".³⁹ The portion resumed on the Inkerman Consolidation was further upstream on the Burdekin (not shown in Figure 5.3).

³⁷ William Gibson, Townsville, to the Under Secretary for Public Lands, Brisbane, 6 March 1886, Q.S.A., LAN/AF 891, In-letter 06773 of 1886.

³⁸ William Gibson, Townsville, to the Under Secretary for Public Lands, Brisbane, 6 March 1886, Q.S.A., LAN/AF 891, In-letter 06773 of 1886.

³⁹ William Gibson, Townsville, to the Under-Secretary for Public Lands, Brisbane, 6 February 1886, Q.S.A., LAN/AF 368, In-letter 03651 of 1886.

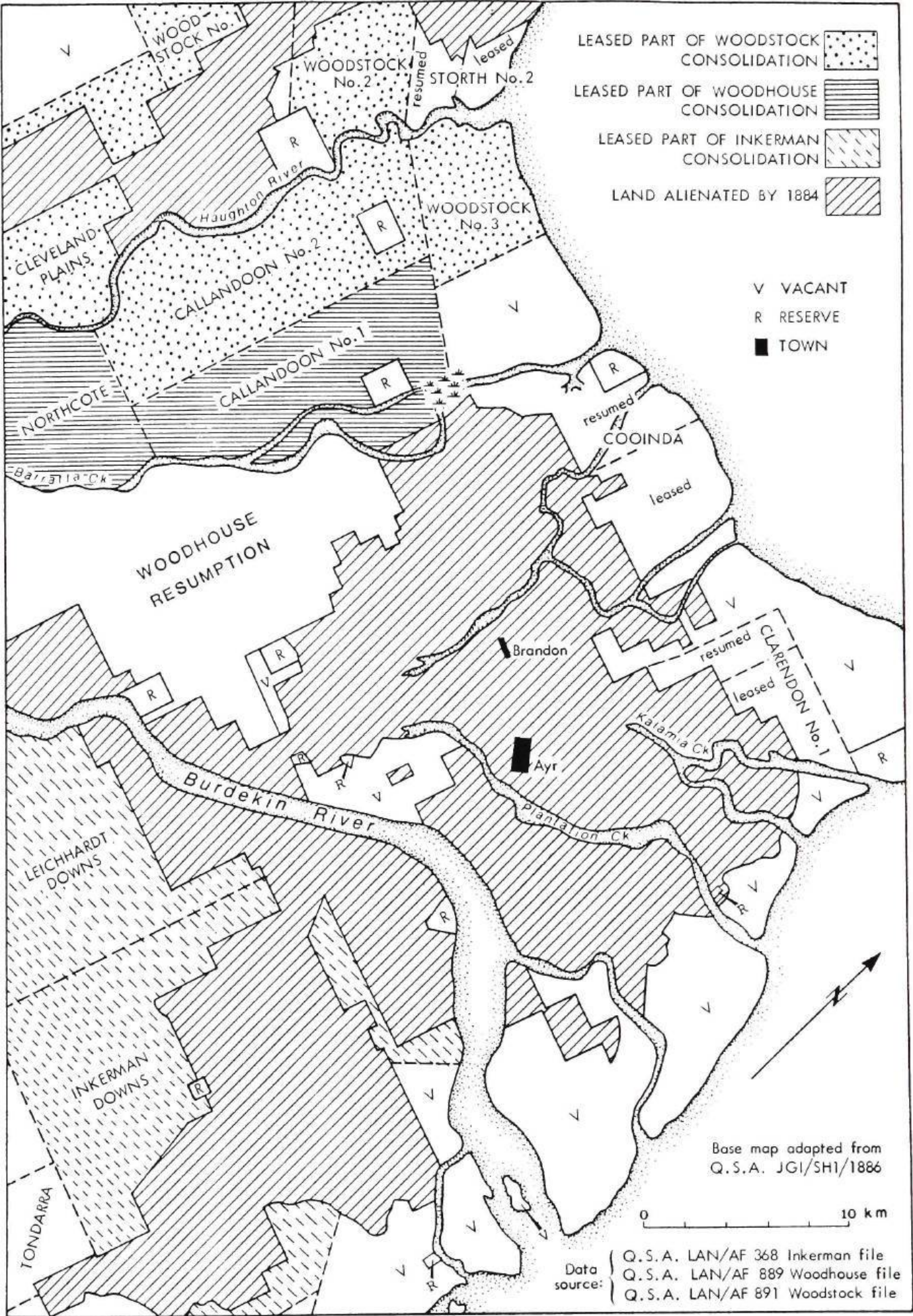


Figure 5.3 Pastoral Resumptions and Consolidations on the Lower Burdekin, 1885-1887.

All other pastoral runs in the district (i.e. Storth No. 2, Cooinda and Clarendon No. 1) had land resumed from them at this time for the purposes of closer settlement.

Most of the land resumed from the pastoral runs on the Lower Burdekin in the late 1880s was available for selection (meaning that it was not too rugged or covered in mangroves) (see Table 5.3). The government opened all the resumed country from Clarendon No. 1, Cooinda and Storth No. 2 for selection in 1887 and declared just over 14,000 acres of the Woodhouse Resumption open for occupation in 1889. All the land opened for selection on Clarendon No. 1 and Cooinda was acquired as grazing farms in 1887, but by 1891 only a small block had been chosen on Storth No. 1. On the Woodhouse Resumption, despite the large acreage offered for selection, only a fraction of it had been acquired as either grazing or agricultural farms by 1891 (see Figures 5.2 and Table 5.3). This occurred undoubtedly because much of the country was unsuitable for selection. The northern end of the Woodhouse Resumption was described as being "very swampy and dangerous for stock as alligators [sic] were very numerous",⁴⁰ while the southern section was poorly watered (see Figure 3.2). Also, the Woodhouse Resumption was located away from the sugar mills that had been established on the Lower Burdekin. Any settlers considering obtaining the land to grow sugarcane, or any agricultural product would have been at a distinct disadvantage, being so far from the sugar mills, the transport network and the district's two small towns - Ayr and Brandon founded in 1882 and 1889 respectively.⁴¹ Eventually, in 1894 just under 12,000 acres of the Woodhouse Resumption were withdrawn from selection.⁴² This country was not re-opened for selection until 1898 (details provided in Chapter 6.3).

⁴⁰ Licensing Commissioner, Townsville, to the Under-Secretary for Public Lands, Brisbane, 2 June 1900, Q.S.A., LAN/AF 889, In-letter 0885 of 1900.

⁴¹ The suggestion to establish a township on the Lower Burdekin was made to Sir Thomas McIlwraith by A.C. Macmillan (see A.C. Macmillan to T. McIlwraith, 27 May 1882, J.O.L., Palmer-McIlwraith Papers, OM 64/19, Box 1, Letter 423). The first town allotments in Ayr, named after the Scottish birthplace of McIlwraith, were sold in August 1882 (P.D.T., 29 July 1882). Brandon was named after Henry Brandon, the Manager of the Mackay branch of the Australian Joint Stock Bank. It was a private subdivision initiated by William Banister (T.T.O., Vol. 26/135).

⁴² Q.G.G., 62 (1894): 1375.

Table 5.3.3. Crown Land Resumptions and Selections on the Lower Burdekin, 1885-1891

Pastoral Runs	Acres ¹ Resumed	Acres Available for Selection ²	Acres Opened ³ for Selection	Acres Selected as Grazing Farms ⁴	Acres Selected as Agricultur- al Farms	Total Acreage Selected from Resumed Areas
Woodhouse	not given	not given	14,167	1,212	339	1,551
Cooinda	7,360	7,360	2,680	2,680	0	2,680
Storth No. 2	2,240	2,240	2,400	530	0	530
Clarendon No. 1	3,200	3,200	3,200	3,200	0	3,200

- Notes:
1. Q.G.G., 38 (1886): 1548, 1553; Q.G.G., 39 (1886): 1214, 1234.
 2. Q.V.P., 2 (1886): 1125.
 3. Q.G.G., 40 (1887): 132, 1087; Q.G.G., 46 (1889): 368.
 4. Q.S.A., LAN/P494.
 5. Q.S.A., LAN/P490, LAN/P491.

The Crown, however, was not the only agent in the late 1880s trying to sell land on the Lower Burdekin. By 1890 sixty per cent of the blocks selected on the Lower Burdekin before 1885 had been made freehold. Some of the district's blocks were quite large, being over 1,000 acres in size. These larger blocks became known as estates. Indeed, several of these estates, as will be seen in the next section, were where the Lower Burdekin's sugar plantations were established in the early 1880s. The names of the Lower Burdekin estates are shown in Figure 5.4.

Interest in subdividing the Lower Burdekin estates into smaller blocks began in 1888 and was associated with discussions surrounding the proposed building of a railway from Townsville to Bowen (for further details see Appendix 2). A report on a meeting in Ayr in 1888 to discuss the building of the railway noted that much interest was shown in the scheme as "several proprietors of large estates are awaiting the advent of the railway to split them up into small agricultural farms."⁴³ However, during 1888 the question of constructing a railway from Bowen to Townsville was still only a matter for debate. Nevertheless, J.A. Holmes, the owner of Acaciafields Estate, decided that the railways would be built in the near future and that the time was suitable to subdivide his property. Holmes hoped to split his estate into twenty-two farms ranging from 50-130 acres in size. Advertisements in a local newspaper promised that any "kind of produce" could be grown on any one of the farms.⁴⁴ Over 140 persons attended the sale in early November 1889, but the bidding was so poor owing to the high reserve placed on the land by the owner that the auctioneer withdrew the whole property.⁴⁵ None of the estate was purchased and Acaciafields was not subdivided until 1896, and then only into two large blocks.⁴⁶

The failure to sell the Acaciafields blocks was soon followed by another unsuccessful estate subdivision. In 1889 the Australian and New Zealand Mortgage Co. (A.N.Z.M. Co.) decided to subdivide part of Airdmillan Estate. The A.N.Z.M. Co. - a London based firm founded in

⁴³ Townsville Herald, 7 July 1888, p. 7.

⁴⁴ Townsville Herald, 5 October 1889, p. 13.

⁴⁵ Townsville Herald, 6 November 1889, p. 6.

⁴⁶ T.T.O., Vol. 114/165, 166.

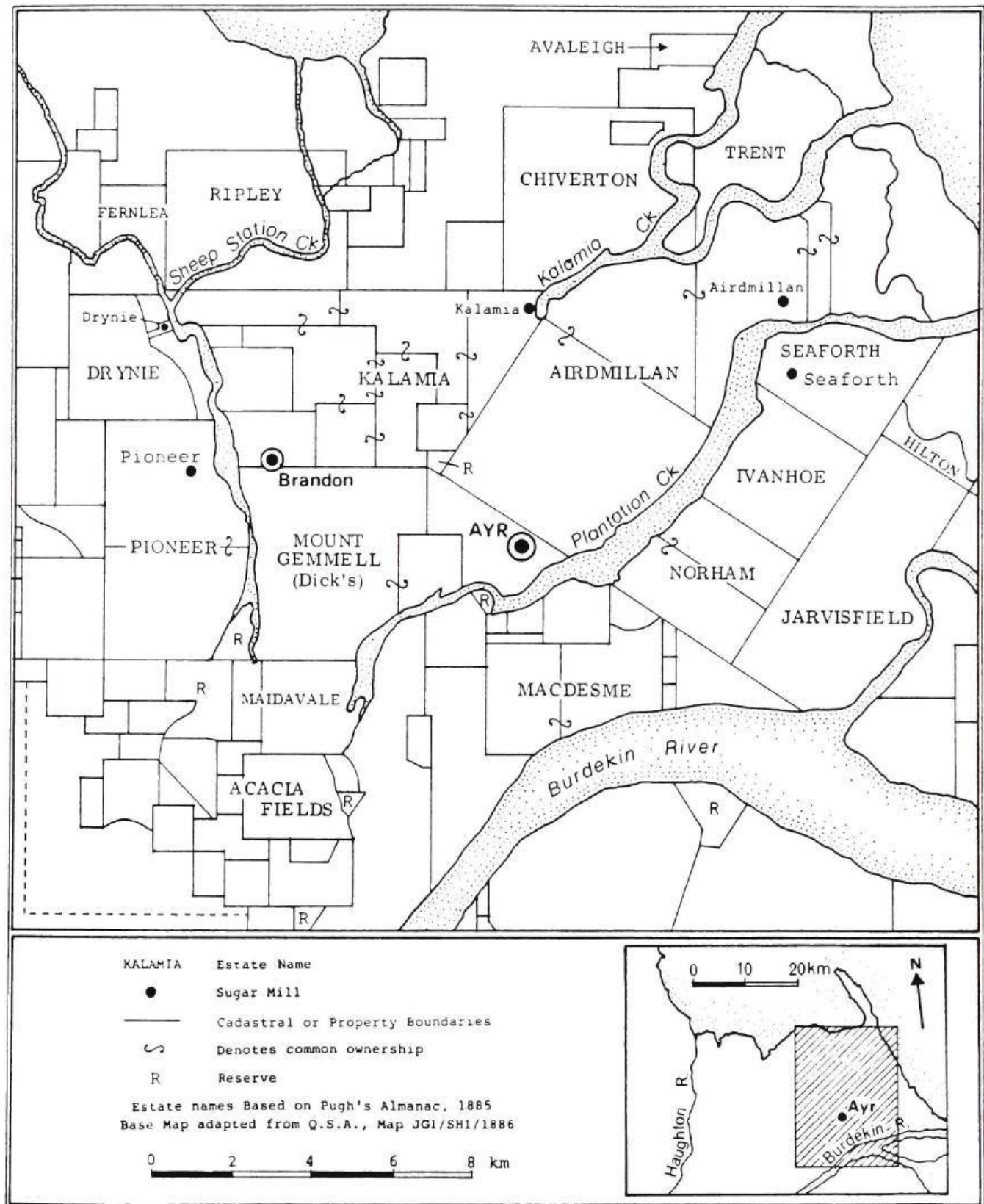


Figure 5.4 The Lower Burdekin Estates, 1885.

1879 and registered in Queensland in 1886⁴⁷ - had taken control of Airdmillan due to its former owners' insolvency because of the depression in the sugar industry. The Company threw open for selection 797 acres in the form of 200 urban allotments (2 roods in size) and twenty-nine small farms (1 - 150 acres in size) on part of Airdmillan Estate closest to Ayr (see Figure 5.5). However, there was little interest shown in the urban allotments, for ten years later only 25 of the 150 allotments had been sold (see Table 5.4). The A.N.Z.M. Co. had more success, however, in disposing of the small farms. Twenty of the initial twenty-nine farms offered for sale had been selected by 1899. Overall, 632 of the 797 acres offered for purchase in 1889 had been bought from the A.N.Z.M. Co. a decade later (see Table 5.4).

Lack of immediate interest in the 1889 subdivision of part of Airdmillan Estate undoubtedly influenced the A.N.Z.M. Co.'s policy towards the subdivision of its other four Lower Burdekin estates (i.e. Kalamia, Seaforth, Norham, Ivanhoe). Indeed, no further subdivisions occurred on the Lower Burdekin estates owned by the A.N.Z.M. Co. until the early 1900s, although parts of the estates were leased to the sugar planters and small farmers in the 1890s (see Chapter 6.4). Similarly, other Lower Burdekin estate owners also refrained from undertaking major subdivisions until the 1900s.

5.3.4 Selectors of the 1880s: Occupations and Patterns of Selection

Reference to Table 5.5 shows that of the four groups securing land on the Lower Burdekin between 1877 and 1891, the small selectors/un-identifiable selectors purchased a third of the Crown land offered for sale. As a group they selected land over the entire time-span 1877-1891, although out of the 59,900 acres purchased by them, 34,404 acres, or 57 per cent was obtained in one year - 1882. Similarly, the pastoralists/graziers, like the small selectors, secured their land over most of this period, except for 1889-1891, when they acquired no land on the

⁴⁷ The objects of the A.N.Z.M. Co. were the investment of money in Australia and New Zealand on the security of mortgages or liens on freehold, leasehold and other property. Like many land investment companies, the A.N.Z.M. Co. was particularly affected by the depression in the 1890s. No dividend was paid after 1895 and a reserve fund of £70,000 was written off between 1895 and 1901. The Company was liquidated in 1913 (see Q.S.A., A /21394/No. 248, Book, 3; R.L. Nash, Australian Joint Stock Companies Years Book 1913-1914 (Sydney: McCarrow & Co., 1914, p. 180).

Table 5.4. Details on the Rate of Selection of the Airdmillan Estate Subdivisions of 1889

Size of Blocks Selected	Year										
	1889	1890	1891	1892	1893	1894	1895	1896	1897	1898	1899
Urban Allotments (< 1 acre) ⁺	5	1	0	3	2	5	2	0	3	2	2
Other Farms (1-150 acres)*	0	6	1	2	3	4	0	1	1	1	1
Total Yearly Acreage Selected	1.4	245.25	5	118.75	155.5	41.5	.5	37	15	6	6
Cumulative Acreage Selected	1.5	246.75	251.75	370.5	526	567.1	568	605	620	626	632

⁺ Amount opened - 75 acres; * Amount opened 722 acres

Source: Assembled from land selection details in T.T.O., Vol. 19/195.

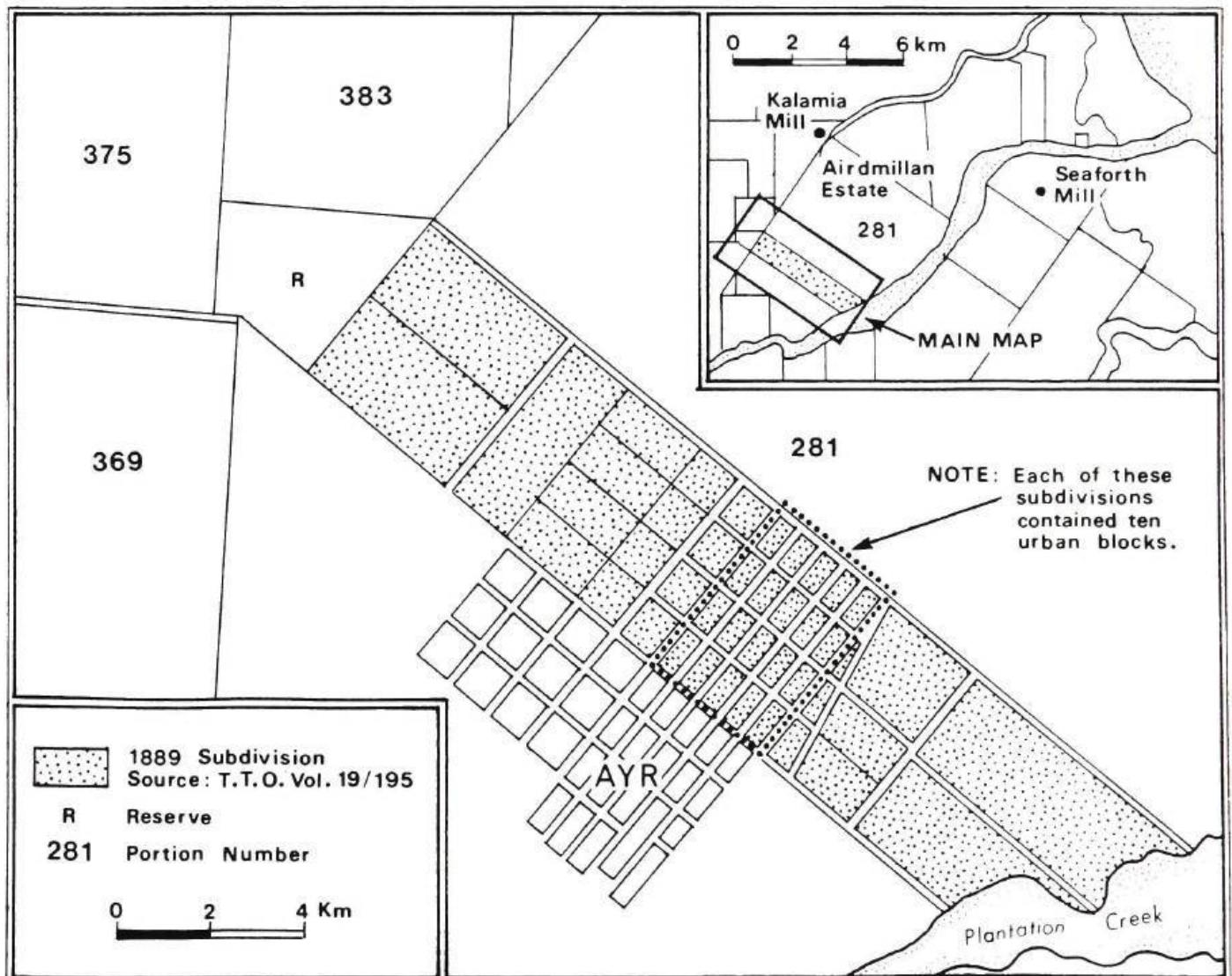


Figure 5.5 The subdivision of Airdmillan Estate, 1889.

Table 5.5. Acres of Crown Land Secured by Various Groups of Selectors on the Lower Burdekin, 1877-1891

	Total	Planters ¹	N.A.P.C. ²	Pastoralists ³	Small and Unidentifiable Selectors ⁴
1877-79	35149	8930	18480	7378	361
1880	47328	11792	15360	12350	7826
1881	31098	12203	2591	11520	4874
1882	39794	1550	-	3840	34404
1883-85	9421	582	-	1440	7399
1886-88	14697	-	-	10588	4109
1889-91	1017	-	-	-	1017
Total	178504	35057(19.6) ⁵	36431(20)	47116(26) ⁶	59900(33.5) ⁷

Notes: ¹ Defined as those who established sugar plantations on the Lower Burdekin or who were sugar planters in other regions.

² A partnership established in 1877 between Thomas McIlwraith, William Collins, William Forrest, J.H. Warner, Sir W. Ingram and Malcolm McEacharm. The N.A.P.C. acquired extensive pastoral holdings in the 1880s. The Company still operates today.

³ A group who acquired larger blocks (usually between 500 and 1,000 acres in size) and whose sole interest was in the grazing of cattle.

⁴ Those who secured homestead selections and smaller conditional selections (usually under 500 acres in size) and others who could not be identified as pastoralists.

⁵ The percentage of the total acreage selected on the Lower Burdekin, 1877-1891.

⁶ Possible underestimate.

⁷ Possible underestimate.

Source: As in Table 5.2.

Lower Burdekin. Peak selection for the pastoralists/graziers occurred in 1880-81.

In contrast to the small selectors and pastoralists, the planters only secured land on the Lower Burdekin before 1885, but most of the purchasing was undertaken between 1877 and 1882 - at the height of a boom in Queensland's sugar industry. The lack of selection by the planters on the Lower Burdekin in the late 1880s is attributable to the depression in the sugar industry which would have precluded capital expenditure on new land. Indeed, three of the six original Lower Burdekin planters were insolvent by 1888 and their selections had been taken over by the mortgagors.

The N.A.P.C. like the planters, acquired most of its Crown land on the Lower Burdekin before 1885, although in the late 1880s the Company expanded its holdings within the region by securing a small number of blocks from other settlers. As a group, the N.A.P.C. purchased less than the small selectors between 1877 and 1890, but the N.A.P.C. was by far the greatest single individual selector of land within the district in the 1880s. Indeed, by 1890 the N.A.P.C. was the largest occupier of land on the Lower Burdekin. It had acquired just over twenty per cent of the Crown land that had been selected in the region since 1877 and leased almost half of the remaining unresumed portions of the pastoral runs in the district (see Figure 5.2).

The selection by different groups produced a definite pattern in the size of block chosen throughout the late 1870s and 1880s. Between 1877 and 1880 a predominance of larger blocks (over 1,000 acres) were selected (see Table 5.6). This pattern occurred because the planters, the N.A.P.C. and some pastoralists were the main group doing the selecting. All three groups by the nature of the land use they intended to pursue required large blocks, and they were able to obtain large blocks under the land legislation in operation at the time. However, each group secured their large blocks in different localities throughout the region. For instance, the N.A.P.C. by 1884 had acquired its blocks for cattle grazing on the resumed portions of Inkerman Downs, Leichhardt Downs, Cleveland Plains and Woodstock runs (see Figure 5.6). This pattern of selection is understandable as the company had also secured the leases on the remaining unselected portions of the runs. Much of the country on the blocks acquired by the N.A.P.C. was suitable for sugar cultivation, yet the

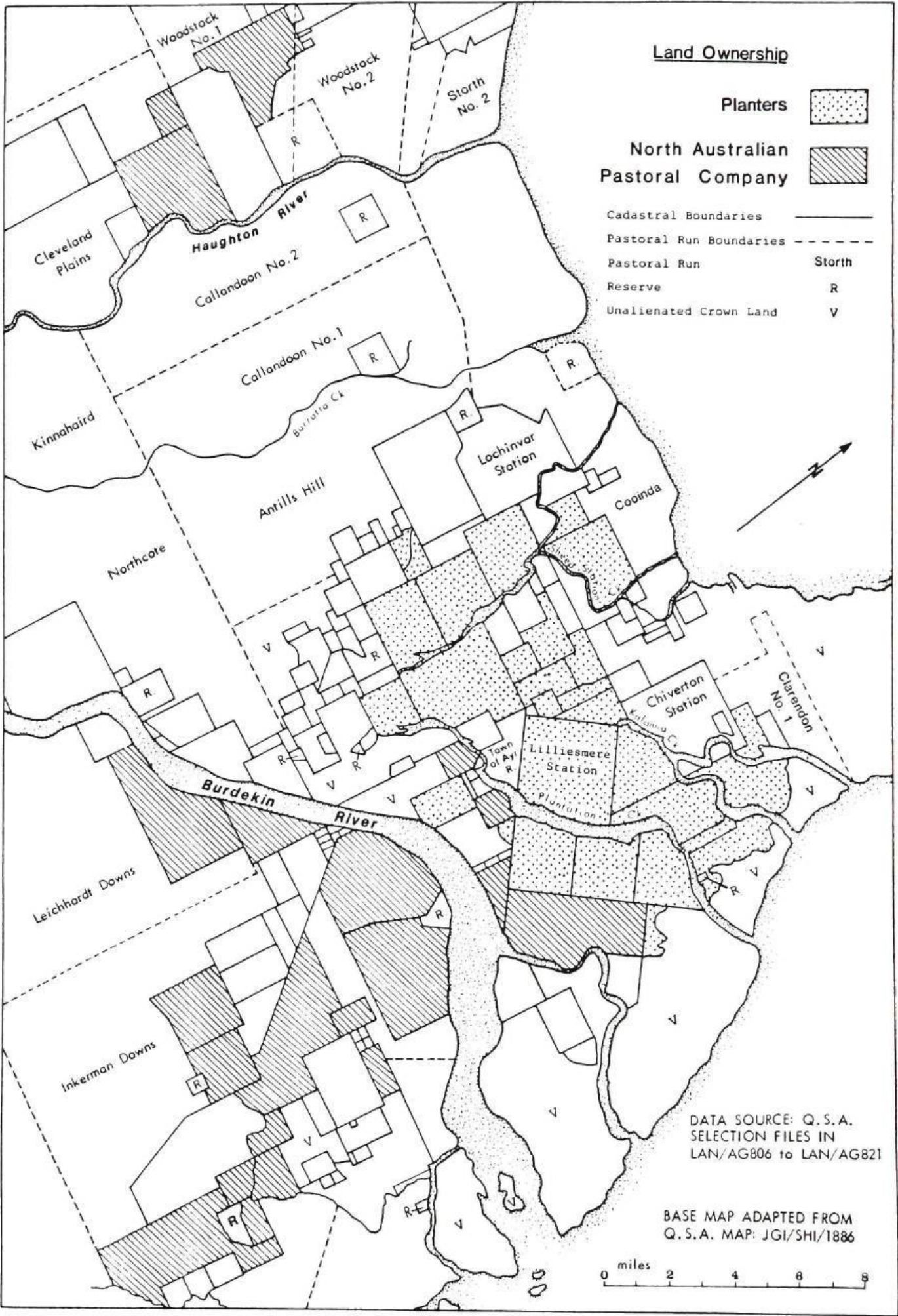


Figure 5.6 Land Owned by the Planters and the North Australian Pastoral Company, 1884.

planters either deliberately decided not to select on that side of the Burdekin or were unable to secure it because of the aggressive purchasing policy of the N.A.P.C. Whatever the reason, all the planters ended up with large blocks on the northern side of the Burdekin River around Sheep Station and Plantation Creeks (see Figure 5.6). This land was suitable for agriculture, close to a reliable water supply (necessary in the manufacture of sugar) and situated near the creeks which provided port facilities from which to ship their raw sugar, for the Burdekin River was only navigable as far as the site of the former town of Wickham on Rita Island (see Figure 5.6).

**Table 5.6. The Size and Number of Blocks of Crown Land
Selected on the Lower Burdekin, 1877-1891**

Size of Blocks (Acres)	Year						
	1877-79	1880	1881	1882	1883-85	1886-88	1889-1891
< 499	1	6	20	24	12	25	7
500-999	4	1	12	4	1	0	0
1000-2999	4	8	14	3	2	6	0
> 3000	7	4	6	0	1	0	0

Source: As in Table 5.2.

Pastoralists also sought good grazing country, but on the northern side of the Burdekin River they were displaced by the planters. As such, they acquired their blocks on the fringes of where the planters' selections ended (e.g. Chiverton and Lochinvar Stations). Other blocks secured by pastoralists were located on the southern side of the Burdekin River on the resumed portions of Inkerman and Leichhardt Downs Runs.

From 1881 onwards smaller blocks (below 1,000 acres) were secured (see Table 5.6). This occurred because the Crown opened the land to purchase in smaller blocks and there was a reduction in the selection by planters and the N.A.P.C. who, as mentioned above, sought large acreages. Most of the smaller blocks chosen in the 1880s on the Lower Burdekin were situated around the western and southern end of Sheep Station and Plantation Creeks (see Figure 5.6).

5.3.5 Reasons for Selection

Why was there more interest in securing blocks on the Lower Burdekin pastoral resumptions between 1877 and 1885 than in the previous

decade? Firstly, between 1865 and 1875 no major pastoral interest operated on the Lower Burdekin, except for the aging Robert Towns. In the late 1870s, however, the N.A.P.C. secured Towns' Lower Burdekin pastoral leases and pursued a policy of purchasing blocks on the resumed portions of the pastoral runs to ensure they maintained significant holdings within the region. Secondly, the depression of 1875-78 in the Queensland sugar industry gave way to a "boom". Planters from 1879 to 1884 scrambled to secure coastal lands considered suitable for sugar cultivation, ignoring such considerations as the heavy initial outlay on establishing plantations and the distance from ports and markets. Six of these planters - overlooking either deliberately or unknowingly the Lower Burdekin's lack of suitable port and low rainfall and Roth's statement that the lands at the mouth of the Burdekin were only "fair" for sugar growing⁴⁸ - selected their blocks and began to form plantations. It appears that once the region had attracted the planters a wave of smaller selectors followed. Some probably intended to begin sugar growing themselves, while others may have selected land for speculative purposes.

5.3.6 Closer Settlement in 1891: An Overview

The state of closer settlement on the Lower Burdekin in 1891 is well illustrated in Figure 5.2. On the southern side of the Burdekin River much of the resumed portion of Inkerman Downs run had been secured by the N.A.P.C., but only a few blocks with river frontage had been acquired on Leichhardt Downs run. The remainder of the country was still held under pastoral lease. On the northern side of the Burdekin River, selections and reservations for public purposes had led to the disappearance of Jarvisfield East and Jarvisfield West runs. However, only a few blocks had been secured on Woodhouse Resumption (formerly Northcote and Antills Hill pastoral runs) and Woodstock No. 2 and Cleveland Plains pastoral runs. In fact much of the country on the northern side of the Burdekin River in 1891 remained occupied under pastoral lease and some runs (e.g. Callandoon No. 2, Woodstock No. 3) had not been subjected to any selection. Also, even though the Crown aimed at closer settlement, much of the Lower Burdekin lands selected by 1891 were encompassed in large cadasters, some over 3,000 acres in size. Nevertheless, interest in the lands of the Lower Burdekin had resulted in

⁴⁸ H.L. Roth, A Report on the Sugar Industry in Queensland (Brisbane: Gordon and Toch, 1880), p. 87.

at least the eastern section of the district being subjected to more closer settlement than previously had been the case in the 1870s. Indeed, it was in the eastern section of the district where, as will be shown in the next section, the Lower Burdekin's sugar industry had its beginnings.

5.4 THE SUGAR INDUSTRY IS ESTABLISHED, 1881-1884

In the midst of the closer settlement that occurred on the Lower Burdekin between 1877 and 1884, it was reported in the Brisbane Courier of 16 November 1881 that large scale sugar cultivation had commenced on the Lower Burdekin at Airdmillan plantation in early 1881. This activity was being financed by the Burdekin Delta Sugar Company Ltd., which was registered in Melbourne in June 1881⁴⁹ and probably not formed in 1879 as claimed by Bolton.⁵⁰ The new Company had an original capital of £150,000 divided into 1,500 shares of £100 each. Its four founding partners were as follows: A.C. Macmillan, a former Engineer for Northern Roads⁵¹; R.W. Graham, a Mackay pastoralist; R.J. Jeffray, the Australasian agent for the A.N.Z.M. Co. and a Director of the Melbourne-Mackay Sugar Co.⁵²; and John Ewen Davidson, a failed Mackay planter.⁵³ Macmillan and Graham mortgaged their lands to the A.N.Z.M. Co. to obtain the funds to invest in the Company.

Airdmillan plantation was the amalgamation of Macmillan's lands selected in 1878 and 1879 and Graham's Lilliesmere Station. It stretched from the border of the Ayr Town Reserve through almost to the coast and occupied the majority of the country between Plantation and Kalamia Creeks (see Figure 5.7). In all, Airdmillan comprised just over 12,000

⁴⁹ Public Record Office, Melbourne. Defunct Company No. 582: Burdekin Delta Sugar Cod. Ltd. Registered 3 June 1881.

⁵⁰ Bolton, A Thousand Miles Away, p. 136.

⁵¹ For details on Macmillan's life see Matthew Fox, The History of Queensland: Its People and Industries (Brisbane: State Publishing Co., 1923), 3: 375-382.

⁵² Connolly, John Drysdale and the Burdekin, p. 39; Saunders, Workers in Bondage, p. 58.

⁵³ Davidson also selected a 500 acre block on the Lower Burdekin in 1881. He named his selection Hilton. It was located to the east of Airdmillan plantation (Q.S.A., LAN/AG 812, Application 341(d). For details on Davidson's life see T.S. Jilek, "John Ewen Davidson", A.S.J., 47 (1975): 15).

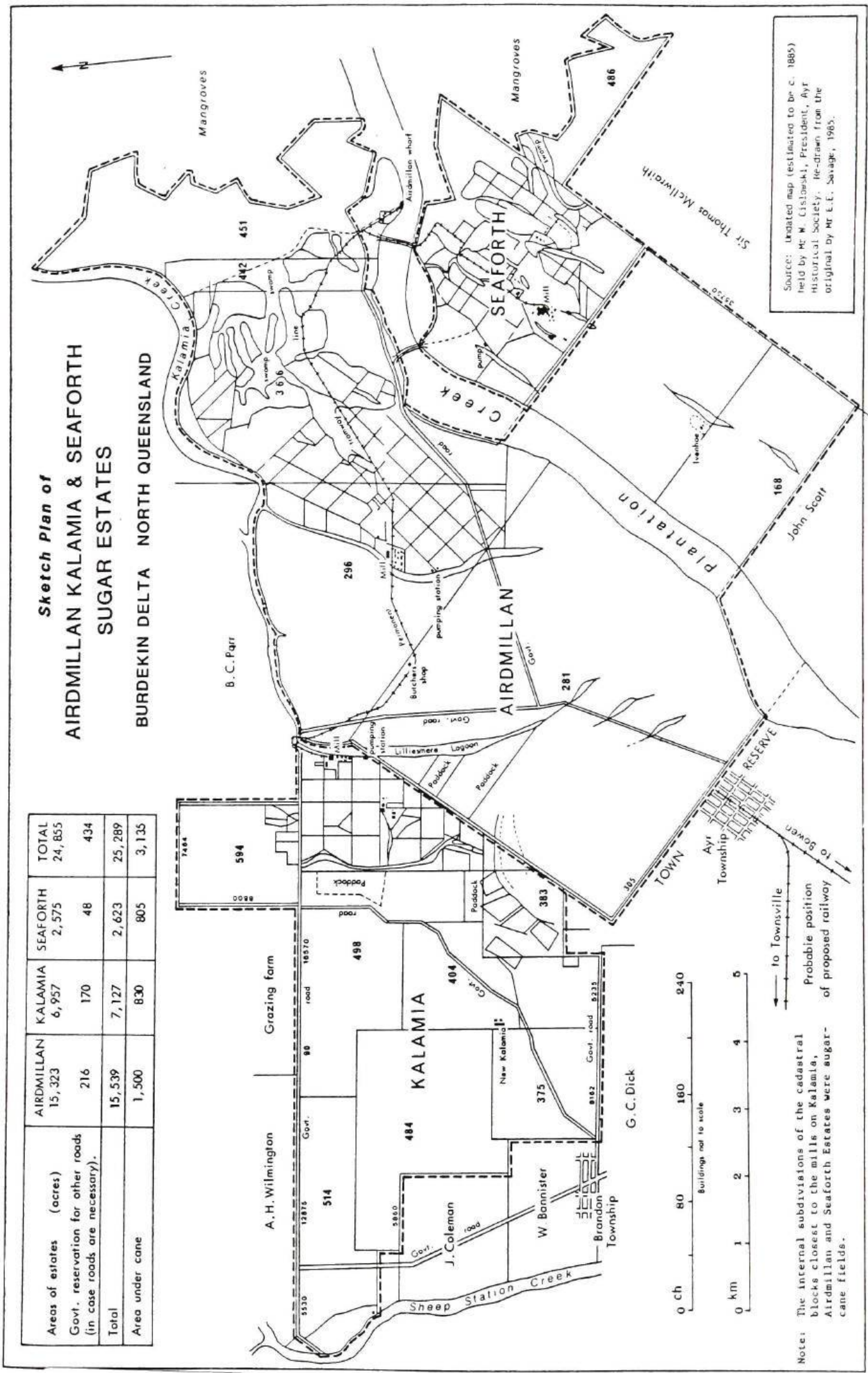


Figure 5.7 A Sketch Plan of Airdmillan, Kalamia and Seaforth Estates. c. 1885.

acres, but at the time of the visit from the Brisbane Courier's reporter, only 800 acres had been cleared and were being broken up by steam ploughs.⁵⁴ About 100 acres had been planted with cane and buildings to house 230 people had also been erected. Forty-eight Europeans, thirty Chinese and 170 Pacific Islanders were employed on the plantation.⁵⁵

Seaforth, east of Airdmillan, was the only other plantation recorded as being in operation on the Lower Burdekin in 1881.⁵⁶ It was founded by James Mackenzie, whose family had established Gairloch plantation in the Herbert River district in the mid-1870s.⁵⁷ Mackenzie had initially selected Seaforth and an adjacent block called Ivanhoe in 1873, but it is reasonable to assume that any plans to commence sugar-cane cultivation on the Lower Burdekin in the mid-1870s were curtailed by his family's bankruptcy and subsequent loss of Gairloch.⁵⁸ Work on forming a plantation at Seaforth did not begin, therefore, until late 1880 or early 1881. At the time of the visit of the Brisbane Courier's reporter in late 1881, 100 acres were under cane. However, unlike Macmillan, Mackenzie did not possess steam ploughs to assist in the breaking up of the cleared land.

Whilst work was beginning on Airdmillan and Seaforth plantations in early 1881, the C.S.R. Co. was investigating possible locations in Queensland where the Company could establish plantations. The report on the Lower Burdekin as a region for the C.S.R. Co. to commence sugar cultivation concluded that:

sugar growing in the Burdekin climate is altogether an

⁵⁴ Brisbane Courier, 22 November 1881. Subsequently, Kalamia and Pioneer plantations also utilized steam ploughs (Queenslander, 14 October 1882; Sydney Morning Herald, 8 September 1884).

⁵⁵ Brisbane Courier, 16 November 1881. See also Bailiff of Crown Lands, Bowen, "Report on Portion 366, Parish of Antill, 5 December 1881", Q.S.A., LAN/AG 807, Application 206a.

⁵⁶ Brisbane Courier, 22 November 1881.

⁵⁷ For details on Mackenzie's life see C.T. Wood, Sugar Country: A Short History of the Raw Sugar Industry of Australia 1864-1964 (Brisbane: Qld. Cane Growers' Council, 1965), p. 14; and N.Q.H., 30 January 1899, p. 35.

⁵⁸ Memorandum of Insolvency of Mackenzie Bros., Gairloch Plantation, Herbert River, 20 June 1877, Q.S.A., LAN/AG 354, File 64.

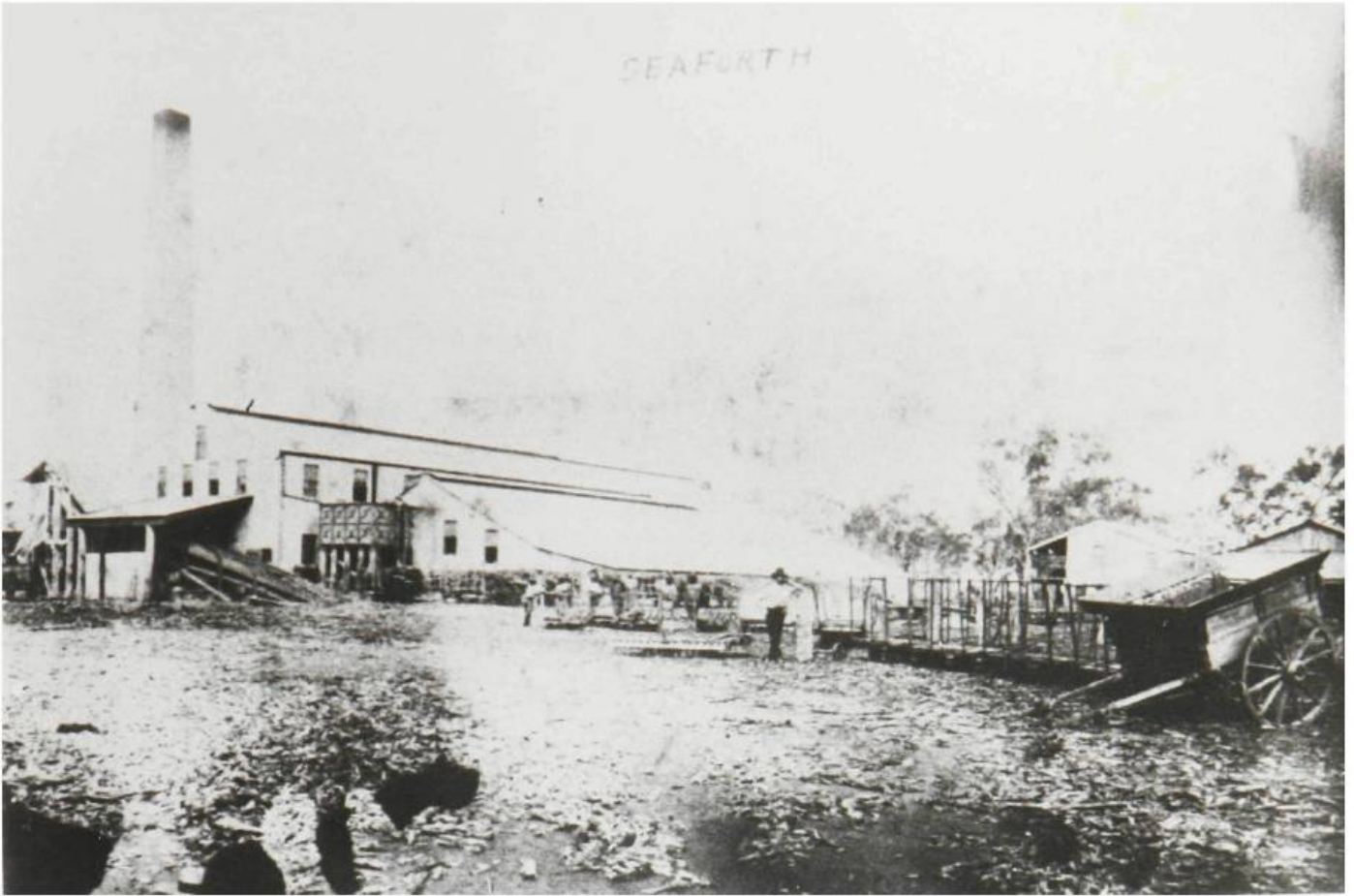


Plate 1 Seaforth Mill, c. 1890.

Photo: Courtesy of Mr R. Conley, Ayr.



Plate 2 Kalamia Mill, c. 1890.

Photo: Kalamia Mill Collection.
Courtesy of C.S.R.

experiment and one that won't be fully tried under at least £50,000.⁵⁹

The C.S.R. Co. heeded its agent's report on the unsuitability of the Lower Burdekin's climate and did not receive special concessions to commence operations in the district, as claimed by Johnston.⁶⁰ However, the Company in the early 1880s did establish mills and plantations at Homebush, near Mackay and on the Johnstone and Herbert Rivers.⁶¹

The C.S.R. Co.'s decision not to commence sugar cultivation on the Lower Burdekin in 1881 had little influence on the development of the region's sugar industry in the early 1880s. Indeed, during the first few months of 1882 considerable progress was made on the Lower Burdekin plantations that were established in 1881. By August 1882 there were 250 acres under cane at Seaforth, machinery ordered for a mill and plans under way to have the factory ready to crush the plantation's crop in 1883.⁶² At Airdmillan plantation it was observed in June 1882 that 80 Europeans, 260 Pacific Islanders and 100 Chinese were now employed by Macmillan and 1,000 acres had been planted with cane.⁶³ Two months later, a report stated that tramways had now been laid on Airdmillan, Macmillan's residence erected and work had commenced on Airdmillan Mill.⁶⁴ Two claims that Airdmillan Mill was erected in 1884, are therefore incorrect.⁶⁵ Future plans for Airdmillan were grandiose - 5,000 acres were to be placed under cultivation and three mills, each capable of producing 3,000 tons of sugar annually, were to be erected.⁶⁶

⁵⁹ George Smith, "Report on the Sugar Lands of the Johnstone, Herbert and Burdekin Rivers and of the Mackay District, 10 January 1881", C.S.R. Archives, Sydney. Box File D10. Folder 6D1.0.6.Item G.

⁶⁰ Johnston, The Call of the Land, p. 57.

⁶¹ Bolton, A Thousand Miles Away, p. 137.

⁶² P.D.T., 12 August 1882; Queenslander, 26 August 1882; University of Glasgow Archives, UGD 118 3/73 Order No. 236 (28 March 1883) and Order No. 280 (11 April 1883).

⁶³ Robert Gray, Townsville, to Charles Gray, 13 June 1882, J.O.L., Gray MS., OM 75/123.

⁶⁴ P.D.T., 12 August 1882; Queenslander, 26 August 1882.

⁶⁵ H. Easterby, The Queensland Sugar Industry: an historical review (Brisbane: Government Printer, 1932), p. 75; Cummins and Campbell Monthly Magazine, 5, 77 (1933): 35.

⁶⁶ P.D.T., 12 August 1882.

New plantations were also established during 1882. In March 1882 there was the first mention of activity on Kalamia plantation,⁶⁷ located between Plantation and Sheep Station Creeks (see Figure 5.7). Kalamia's founders were two brothers, Charles and John Young, described as "squatters in New South Wales and friends of Mr. Jeffray and relations of his London partners".⁶⁸ Young Bros. formed the plantation in 1881-82 by amalgamating the blocks they had purchased from their former owners with Crown land they had secured.⁶⁹ By late 1882 machinery for a mill on Kalamia had been ordered from W. & A. McOnie in Glasgow (the same firm from which Airdmillan and Seaforth obtained their plant) and all the buildings for their employees had been completed. In addition, steam ploughs were in operation breaking up the ground grubbed by a large number of Chinese, drains had been constructed to carry away surface water and sufficient cane planted to provide plants for 1883.⁷⁰

Pioneer plantation, directly to the west of Kalamia, was also observed to be the scene of considerable activity in 1882. The original owners of Pioneer were John Spiller, a Mackay sugar planter, and Henry Brandon, the manager of the Australian Joint Stock Bank in Mackay. They had chosen blocks on the Lower Burdekin in 1880. However, it was not until early 1882 that Messrs. Spiller and Brandon sent Louis Hoey, Robert McLaughlin and Andrew Masterton, all employees of Spiller's Mackay plantations, to the Burdekin with a team of Europeans and Pacific Islanders to begin work on Pioneer.⁷¹ By August 1882 several hundred acres had been cleared on the plantation, 200 acres planted with cane and

⁶⁷ P.D.T., 23 March 1882.

⁶⁸ A.C. Macmillan, Airdmillan, to Sir T. McIlwraith, Brisbane, 27 March 1882, J.O.L., McIlwraith-Palmer Papers, OM 64/19, Box 1, Letter 423.

⁶⁹ Q.S.A., LAN/AG807, Applications 267a, 272b; LAN/AG 808, Application 283; LAN/AG812, Applications 346a, 346b; LAN/AG815, Application 396f.

⁷⁰ P.D.T., 12 August 1882; University of Glasgow Archives, UGD 118, 3/68, Order No. 352 - Order 411 (24 June 1882); Queenslander, 14 October 1882.

⁷¹ Delta Advocate, 3 September 1938; The Pioneer, Winter 1981, p. 3; Manning, In their own hands, p. 32. For details on the contributions Hoey and McLaughlin made to the development of the Lower Burdekin sugar industry see Fox, The History of Queensland, pp. 728-729 and The Pioneer, Winter 1981, pp. 3-4.

"Kanaka huts" and other substantial buildings erected.⁷² Spiller's and Brandon's association with Pioneer Plantation, however, lasted only until May 1883, when they sold it to Drysdale Bros.; a partnership consisting of the following gentlemen: George Russel Drysdale, Byna Station, New South Wales; Edmund Mackenzie Young, of the same place; William Drysdale, Scotland; Alexander Drysdale, Victoria; Arthur Drysdale, Scotland; and John Bell, Victoria. The capital was £50,000, comprised of 50 shares, sixteen of which were held by G.R. Drysdale, twelve by Edmund Mackenzie Young, six by William Drysdale, six by Alexander L. Drysdale, four by Arthur Drysdale and six by John Bell.⁷³

Ripley Estate, to the north of Pioneer, was also another locality on the Lower Burdekin where activities related to forming a sugar plantation had obviously commenced in 1882. In August its proprietors, Windsor Bros., were observed as getting together both "white and black labour required for their enterprise".⁷⁴ A few months later in a Customs Report it was recorded that fifty acres had been cultivated with sugar-cane on Ripley in 1882.⁷⁵ The same report also listed fifteen acres of sugar-cane growing on Maidavale, the property of Dr. Joseph Ahearne, the Government Medical Officer for Townsville.

Drynie was the only other Lower Burdekin location where sugar-cane was observed as being cultivated in 1882, although the amount growing was simply described as "a fine lot".⁷⁶ The owner of Drynie was Colin Munro, a former planter on the Albert River and probably a member of the Melanesian recruiting firm, Messrs. Fenwick, Scott and Munro and Co.⁷⁷ In addition to beginning sugar growing on the Lower Burdekin, Munro in 1882, with new partners, Robert Philp of Burns Philp and Co.

⁷² P.D.T., 12 August 1882.

⁷³ Connolly, John Drysdale and the Burdekin, pp. 47-48.

⁷⁴ P.D.T., 12 August 1882.

⁷⁵ Inspector of Distilleries, Townsville, "Return of Sugar Produced and Land Under Sugar Cultivation for 1882 and Estimates for 1883/84, 27 April 1883", Australian Archives, Canberra, CP 148/1.

⁷⁶ P.D.T., 26 August 1882.

⁷⁷ Q.S.A., LAN/231, Application No. 5; Q.V.P., 3 (1876): Ev. Hon. G. Sanderson, p. 147, Q.2062.

and Joseph Ahearne, formed the Townsville Shipping Co. Ltd.⁷⁸ The aim of the new firm was to acquire the schooner Ceara for the purposes of introducing Pacific Islanders into Queensland. Munro and his new partners no doubt hoped to supply the Lower Burdekin plantations with Melanesian workers.

Preparations for the commercial production of raw sugar on the Lower Burdekin finally culminated in the 1883 crushing season. Some confusion exists, however, over which Lower Burdekin mills operated in 1883. According to the contemporary records, Airdmillan Mill became the first factory to begin operations in the district. It was not Drynie Mill as claimed in a later report.⁷⁹ Furthermore, Airdmillan Mill commenced crushing in July 1883 and not in August 1883 as claimed by Connolly or 1884 as suggested by Woods and Donnelly.⁸⁰ Also, Seaforth Mill did not crush in 1883 as claimed by a 1938 newspaper report.⁸¹ It was still under construction. The crop from Seaforth plantation was sent to Airdmillan Mill,⁸² which produced 1,230 tons of sugar during its first crushing season (see Table 5.7).

A mill was also being erected on Pioneer plantation in 1883. By September the foundations of the stack had been dug, stone and gravel carted for the bricks and the posts of the main building were being put in place. Machinery for the factory had also been ordered from Glasgow.⁸³ In addition, grubbing and clearing of another 400 acres was being undertaken.⁸⁴ A further report a month later noted that Pioneer

⁷⁸ Q.S.A., A/21350. See also, K. Buckley and K. Klugman, The History of Burns Philip (n.p.: Burns Philip Co. Ltd., 1981), p. 24; James Burn to Robert Philip, 15 November 1881, J.O.L., Philip MS., OM65/32, 2/293.

⁷⁹ P.D.T., 7 July 1883; N.Q.R., 10 September 1938, p. 62.

⁸⁰ See Connolly, John Drysdale and the Burdekin, p. 51; Austin Donnelly, The Port of Townsville (Sydney: Townsville Harbour Board, 1959), p. 31; and Wood, Sugar Country, p. 19.

⁸¹ N.Q.R., 10 September 1938, p. 62.

⁸² Sydney Morning Herald, 15 September 1884; Pugh's Almanac, 1884, p. 376.

⁸³ Anon., "Description of Pioneer Estate, 1888", J.C.U., PMR/[C.T/1] Box 7, Article 4b.

⁸⁴ G.R. Drysdale to E.M. Young, 25 September 1883, J.C.U., PMR/[C.T/1] Box 7, Article 1.

Table 5.7. Tons of Sugar Produced by the Lower Burdekin Mills, 1883-1891

Mills	1883	1884	1885	1886	1887	1888	1889	1890	1891
Airdmillan	1230	*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pioneer	-	889	893	1095	2532	644	1561	2472	2292
Kalamia	-	500	800	*	c.1500	*	*	c.1200	*
Seaforth	-	*	*	*	c.1200	*	c.1000	c.1200	*
Drynie	-	-	*	-	c. 200	-	-	-	-
Total	1230	3537	2121	2535	5460	1076	3230	4836	4377

* Output could not be determined

- Did not operate

Sources: Annual Reports of Chief Inspector of Distilleries, 1883-1892, in Q.V.P.

Anon., Pioneer Sugar Mills (Pty) Ltd., 1884-1958 (n.p.: Pioneer Sugar Mills (Pty.) Ltd., 1958), p. 24.

Townsville Herald, 17 September 1887, p. 18; 19 November 1887, p. 19; 16 November 1889, p. 23; 22 November 1890, p. 15.

Ev. Charles Young, before the Hon. Justice Paul for the claim for compensation of Young Bros., Kalamia, 12 February 1886, p. 3., Q.S.A., COL/A460.

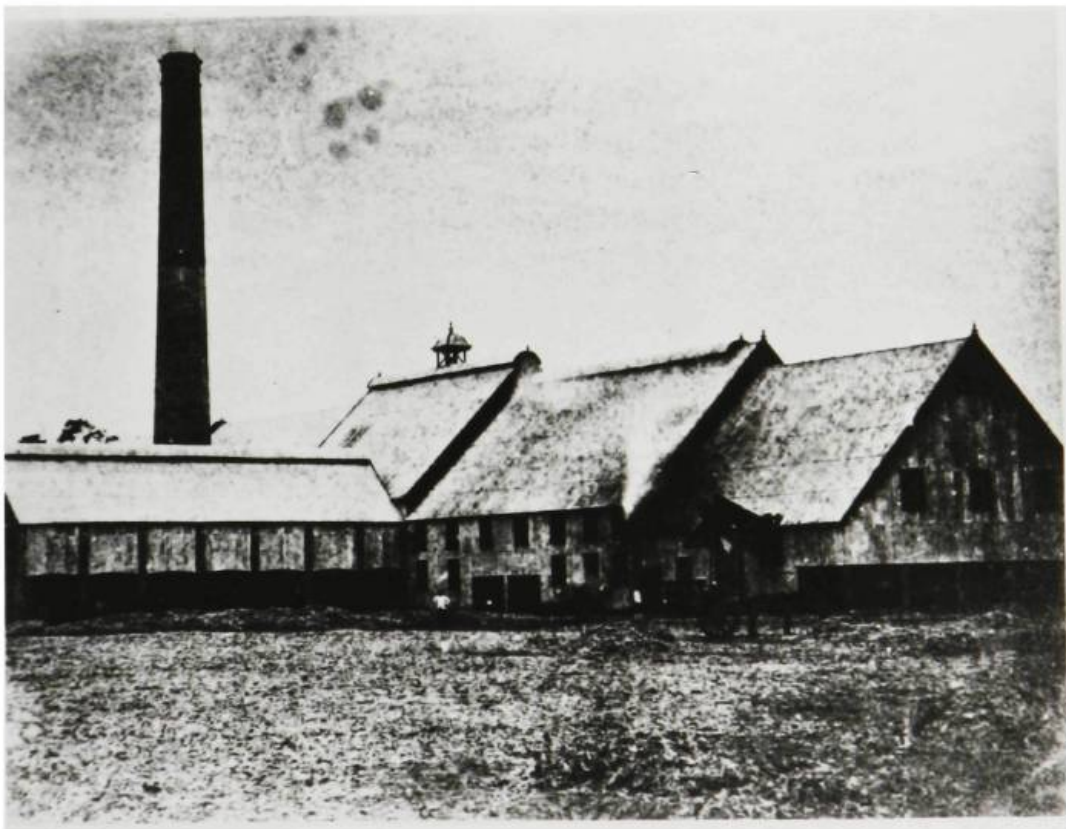
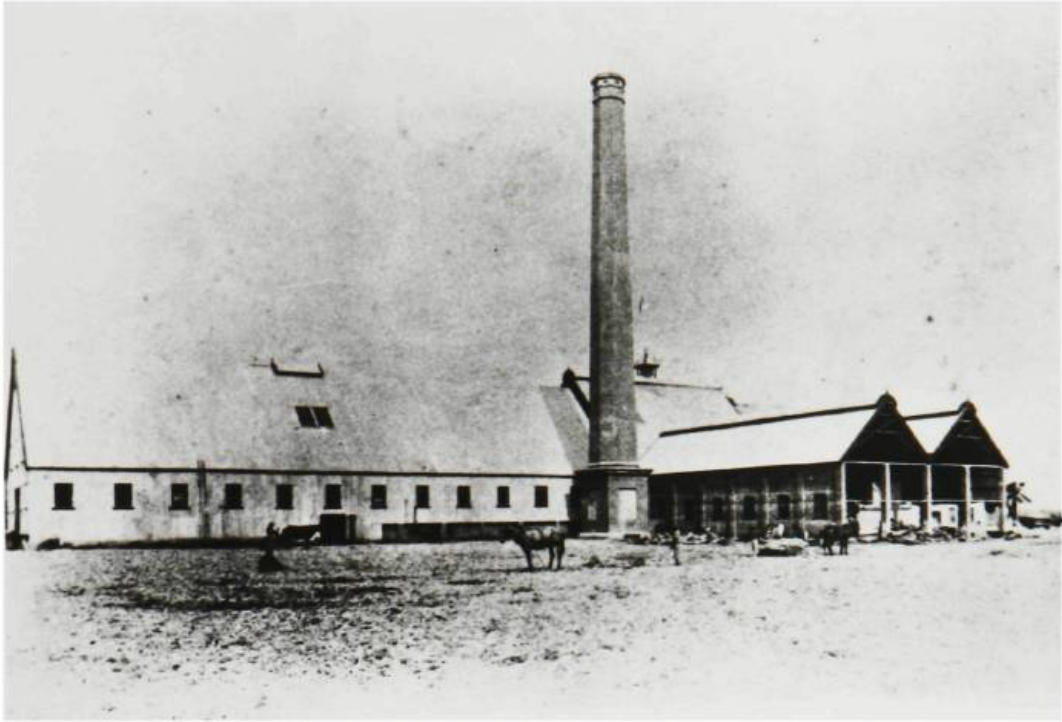


Plate 3 Two views of Pioneer Mill, c. 1888.
Note the heaped megass spread in front of
the mill to dry in the sun.

Photo: Courtesy of John Oxley Library.

plantation was the largest estate in the western portion of the district, for it had 570 acres cultivated with cane and employed 116 Pacific Islanders and 36 white men. The same report also mentioned that close to Pioneer was Maidavale, where eight Europeans and seventeen Pacific Islanders were attending to sixty acres cropped with sugar-cane and clearing another eighty acres.⁸⁵

By September 1883 a mill was also under construction at Kalamia,⁸⁶ although it did not crush in 1883 as claimed by a newspaper report in 1938.⁸⁷ Colin Munro by late 1883 had also ordered machinery from Sutton and Co., Brisbane, for a mill he was planning to erect on Drynie. However, in late 1883 there was still only ten acres of cane on Drynie, attended to by eighteen Pacific Islanders and five Europeans.⁸⁸

Sugar-cane was also recorded for the first time in 1883 as being grown on the following properties: Trent, farmed by William Oliver; Mount Gemmell, owned by Gavin G. Dick; Fernlea, the property of Robert Jack⁸⁹; and Avaleigh, the block selected by Andrew Lambton. However, details on the amounts cultivated were not provided.⁹⁰ There was even a report that the N.A.P.C. had cleared 150 acres on one of their blocks on the southern side of the Burdekin River and were planning to commence sugar planting.⁹¹ This plan was quite probable, as the N.A.P.C. had paid James Mackenzie in late 1882 to plant fifty acres

⁸⁵ Planter and Farmer, October 1883, p. 632.

⁸⁶ G.R. Drysdale to E.M. Young, 25 September 1883, J.C.U., PMR [C.T/1] Box 7, Article 1.

⁸⁷ N.Q.R., 10 September 1938, p. 62.

⁸⁸ Planter and Farmer, October 1883, p. 632.

⁸⁹ A Scotsman who migrated to Australia in 1863 and settled in the Mackay district. He selected land on the Lower Burdekin in the early 1880s. Descendants of his still own the property today (see The Pioneer, Winter 1981, p. 2).

⁹⁰ Pugh's Almanac, 1884, p. 376.

⁹¹ Bailiff of Crown Lands, Bowen, "Report on Portion 443, Parish of Inkerman, 22 September 1883", Q.S.A., LAN/AG810, Application 329a.

of cane on their property at Jarvisfield, indicating that the Company was interested in cane growing on the Lower Burdekin.⁹²

Preparations on the Lower Burdekin sugar plantations were disrupted in early 1884 by a cyclone. Despite the delays caused by this event, Airdmillan, Seaforth, Kalamia and Pioneer Mills all crushed in late 1884. For Pioneer and Kalamia 1884 was their inaugural crushing season, although it did not run smoothly. Kalamia Mill was short of steam and the centrifugals did not work efficiently, while at Pioneer Mill the factory could not work up to full power due to lack of labour.⁹³ Drynie, the district's fifth mill was still under construction.⁹⁴

Each mill that crushed in 1884 was primarily supplied by crops grown on its own plantation. However, a few small growers were able to supply some of the cane crushed at the mills. Seaforth Mill processed cane grown by John Scott on Norham, Kalamia Mill was supplied with small crops from Trent and Avaleigh,⁹⁵ while Pioneer Mill accepted cane from William Payard,⁹⁶ Mount Gemmell and Maidavale.⁹⁷ Together, the four mills were able to produce just over 3,500 tons of sugar (see Table 5.7). Unfortunately, it was not possible to locate the individual outputs for all the mills, but it is reasonable to assume that Airdmillan mill would have produced the largest tonnage.

⁹² John Carr to Sir Thomas McIlwraith, 28 October 1882, J.O.L., Palmer-McIlwraith Papers, OM 62/19, Box 1, Letter 552; Bailiff of Crown Lands, Bowen, "Report on Portion 435, Parish of Morrill, 27 September 1883", Q.S.A., LAN/AG810, Application 326a.

⁹³ Ev. David Donald, before the Hon. Justice Paul for the claim for compensation of Drysdale Bros., Pioneer, n.dat., p. 28; Ev. Charles Young, before the Hon. Justice Paul, for the claim for compensation of Young Bros., Kalamia, 12 February 1886, p. 5. Both copies of the transcripts of this evidence are located in Q.S.A., COL/A460.

⁹⁴ Sydney Morning Herald, 15 September 1884.

⁹⁵ Pugh's Almanac, 1885, p. 433.

⁹⁶ A very early settler in the district who established Waterview. For details on his life see Fox, The History of Queensland, pp. 730-733 and N.Q.H., 12 April 1906, p. 6.

⁹⁷ See J.C.U., PMR/CJI: Pioneer Mill Cheque Journal 1883-1898. Under the Sugar Cane Account for 1884, cheques were made out to the three farmers listed above, indicating Drysdale Bros. purchased their crops.

The successful establishment of sugar growing on the Lower Burdekin between 1880 and 1884 did not occur without problems. A major difficulty faced by the planters was inadequate port facilities. Drysdale Bros., using the coastal steamers of the firm Burns Philp & Co., received their goods and shipped their sugar to Townsville for re-loading via the Barratta Creek landing place.⁹⁸ Airdmillan, Seaforth and Kalamia plantations were connected by tramways to Macmillan's wharf on Plantation Creek and were served by Messrs. Aplin Brown and Co. Ltd. However, the steamer service to both localities was irregular, at the best fortnightly, and was hampered by the shallow depth of the tidal streams.

As early as August 1882 an attempt was made to improve the district's poor accessibility, for it was reported that the Lower Burdekin planters were contemplating the formation of a tramway from Pioneer Estate to the Barratta Creek landing place. A petition was also sent to the Townsville Chamber of Commerce asking that organization to support the move to get the Lower Burdekin connected by a branch line to the Townsville-Charter Towers railway.⁹⁹ Nothing eventuated from these efforts in 1882, so in 1883 the planters petitioned the government to connect the district by tramway to a proposed harbour on Cape Bowling Green.¹⁰⁰ The aim of this venture was to overcome the need to ship sugar to Townsville for reloading before it could be sent to other ports for sale. However, the tramway and harbour were never built. Complaints about the irregularity of the steamers and pronouncements about railway communication with Townsville or Charter Towers being of great benefit to the Lower Burdekin continued throughout the 1880s, but nothing was done to improve the district's transport problems until the late 1890s.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ The origins of this small landing place could not be determined. It was probably operational in the late 1870s. By 1883, it was the site of a store and Post Office (Pugh's Almanac, 1884, p. 376).

⁹⁹ P.D.T., 12 August 1882; Queenslander, Supplement, 26 August 1882, p. 1.

¹⁰⁰ B.J. Wardell, Melbourne, to Sir T. McIlwraith, Brisbane, 15 June 1883, Q.S.A., COL/A364, In-letter 3432 of 1883; Planter and Farmer, October 1883, p. 631.

¹⁰¹ P.D.T., 22 August 1885; P.D.T., 20 August 1887; Townsville Herald, 24 September 1887, p. 7; Townsville Herald, 1 March 1890, p. 12; Q.V.P., 4 (1889); Ev. W. Payard, p. 238, Q. 4730; Ev. C. Young, p. 235; Qs. 4827, 4830; Ev. J. Drysdale, p. 244, Qs. 5160, 5161; Ev. J.

The planters, in particular, were left with a cumbersome and expensive system of shipping their sugar to markets.

Irregular and low rainfall also became a concern of the planters. During 1881 and 1882 the Lower Burdekin received over 1,250 mm of rainfall, but 1883 was a drought year (see Table 3.4). George Drysdale writing in September 1883 complained of months with little rain and dying cane. A well was put down on Pioneer and the engine from the saw bench, when it could be spared, was used to irrigate the withering cane.¹⁰² This strategy must have been successful, for a month later it was reported that fourteen wells had been sunk on Pioneer and water was being applied to the cane in an effort to keep it alive.¹⁰³ By January 1884 it was also recorded that Macmillan was irrigating sixteen acres of cane with pumping machinery.¹⁰⁴ The planters no doubt were relieved when substantial rain fell in February 1884. However, the bad season in 1883 provided them with evidence of what was to be one of the district's major shortcomings - lack of reliable rainfall.

Problems with their labour supply were also a worry for the planters. Drunkenness amongst workers through sly grog, labourers absconding and outbursts of racial violence between Melanesians were all reported on the Lower Burdekin in the early 1880s.¹⁰⁵ However, it was the increasing shortage of workers that became of real concern. As early as 1883 Drysdale Bros. were forced to import Chinese from Hong

Mackenzie, p. 242 Q. 5075.

¹⁰² G.R. Drysdale to E.M. Young, 25 September 1883, J.C.U., PMR [C.T/1] Box 7, Article 1.

¹⁰³ Planter and Farmer, October 1883, p. 631.

¹⁰⁴ Planter and Farmer, January 1884, p. 2.

¹⁰⁵ Connolly, John Drysdale and the Burdekin, p. 62, A.C. Macmillan to the Colonial Secretary, Brisbane, 21 March 1882, Q.S.A., COL/A33, Telegram 1409 of 1882; Inspector of Pacific Islanders, Townsville, to the Immigration Agent, Brisbane, 17 March 1884, Q.S.A., COL/A385, In-letter 2293 of 1884; Sydney Morning Herald, 8 September 1884; John Buckland et al., "Report of the Royal Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Circumstances under which labourers have been introduced into Queensland from New Guinea and other islands", Q.V.P., 2 (1885): 823.

Kong. Used in grubbing land, they demanded higher wages than Melanesians and appeared to be unsatisfactory workers, for in the words of George Drysdale, "they all bolted as they found they could do better for themselves on the diggings".¹⁰⁶ The problem worsened in the early months of 1884 because of the unusually high death rate amongst the Pacific Islanders on the Lower Burdekin and difficulties in recruiting replacements.¹⁰⁷ Consequently, all the district's planters were forced to seek labour from alternative sources. Drysdale Bros. and Young Bros. imported Malays, as did James Mackenzie, who also employed local Aborigines, while Macmillan engaged Maltese - he even built a church for their comfort.¹⁰⁸

The efforts by the Lower Burdekin planters to augment their workforces failed to substantially improve their labour situation. Macmillan described his attempt at using Maltese as an "utter failure". On the other plantations many of the Malays absconded.¹⁰⁹ Indeed, it appears that the labour situation became so acute towards the end of the year that George Drysdale even considered importing Malays again,¹¹⁰ while public meetings of Lower Burdekin residents called for a new North

¹⁰⁶ Ev. George Drysdale, before the Hon. Justice Paul for the claim for compensation of Drysdale Bros., Pioneer, n.dat., p. 28, Q.S.A., COL/A460.

¹⁰⁷ Sydney Morning Herald, 15 September 1884.

¹⁰⁸ Sydney Morning Herald, 8 and 15 September 1884; P.M.B., Annual Balance Sheet, 30 June 1884; Queenslander, 15 December 1883, p. 973; Ev. James Mackenzie, before the Hon. Justice Paul for the claim for compensation of James Mackenzie, Seaforth, n.dat., p. 9, Q.S.A., COL A/460; Notes and Evidence prepared by John A. Wallace, Inspector of Pacific Islanders, Townsville, n.dat., but estimated to be late 1884, Q.S.A., CRS/150.

¹⁰⁹ Q.V.P., 4 (1889): Ev. A.C. Macmillan, p. 143, Q.4913; Ev. James Mackenzie, before the Hon. Justice Paul for the claim for compensation of James Mackenzie, Seaforth, n.dat., p. 9, Q.S.A., COL/A460, Ev. David Donald, before the Hon. Justice Paul, for the claim for compensation of Drysdale Bros., Pioneer, n.dat., p. 9, Q.S.A., COL/A460; W.O. Hodgkinson, "Report on Central Mills", Q.V.P., 2 (1886): 7.

¹¹⁰ G.R. Drysdale, to E.M. Young, 27 October 1884, J.C.U., PMR [C.T/1] Box 7, Article 3.



Plate 4 Melanesians loading sugar-cane, Pioneer plantation, c. 1888.

Photo: Courtesy of John Oxley Library.



Plate 5 A reputed photograph of the Melanesian labourers on Kalamia plantation. Date unknown.

Photo: Courtesy of Mr R.G. Young, Newcastle.

Queensland state or for the government to introduce coolies into Queensland.¹¹¹

The labour shortage curtailed the Lower Burdekin planters' ambitions. George Drysdale by 1884 had abandoned the idea of erecting another mill on Pioneer, for he wrote to his partners:

The large expense entailed in forming the plantation has rather frightened me, and with the labour difficulty in the way, I feel as if we ought to lessen our interests.¹¹²

Similarly, it was reported in September that Young Bros. had abandoned the original idea of erecting a second mill at New Kalamia because of the unsettled state of the labour question,¹¹³ while later in the year it was observed that Airdmillan was at a standstill.¹¹⁴ However, it was not only the labour shortage that ended the plans of the Lower Burdekin planters for new mills, and undoubtedly large profits. As mentioned earlier, the world sugar prices fell significantly in 1884, thus shattering a period of prosperity and expansion in Queensland's sugar industry.

5.5 STAGNATION AND CHANGE, 1885-1891

Reduced returns from the sale of the 1884 season's sugar began affecting the Lower Burdekin in the early months of 1885, when it was observed that a large percentage of the white population was leaving the district.¹¹⁵ In addition, it was announced that the English supporters of the Burdekin Delta Sugar Company had decided that Airdmillan Mill

¹¹¹ Mackay Mercury, 20 August 1884; Mackay Mercury, 22 November 1884; P.D.T., 13 December 1884.

¹¹² G.R. Drysdale to E.M. Young, 14 May 1884, J.C.U., PMR/[C.T/1] Box 7, Article 2. See also Sydney Morning Herald, 8 September 1884.

¹¹³ Sydney Morning Herald, 8 September 1884.

¹¹⁴ Notes and Evidence prepared by John A. Wallace, Inspector of Pacific Islander Labourers, Townsville, n.dat., but estimated to be late 1884, Q.S.A., CRS/150.

¹¹⁵ P.D.T., 10 January 1885; J. Bradburn, Ayr, to the Under-Secretary, Dept. of Public Instruction, Brisbane, 2 February 1885, Q.S.A., EDU/Z88, In-letter 959 of 1885.

should not crush that season, as it would be more economical to crush the cane at Kalamia and Seaforth Mills.¹¹⁶ Parts of Airdmillan plantation were also being leased to Chinese, no doubt in an effort to have further sections on the estate grubbed and cleared without incurring expense for the Company.¹¹⁷ There is, however, little wonder Airdmillan Mill was forced to close. As early as September 1883 George Drysdale commented that money was being uselessly spent on the factory and that it was "extravagantly managed".¹¹⁸ Indeed, a reporter visiting the closed mill in 1887 thought it appeared to be over-endowed with machinery.¹¹⁹

Airdmillan plantation continued to operate in 1886 and 1887, although on a significantly reduced scale. The number of Melanesians on the estate fell from 222 in June 1885 to seven in December 1886.¹²⁰ The cane (probably ratoons) that was harvested from Airdmillan in 1886 and 1887 was crushed at Kalamia and Seaforth Mills (see Table 5.8). After 1887 the lands were left idle until leased to small farmers in the mid-1890s (see Chapter 6.5 for a full discussion). Despite some talk of re-opening Airdmillan Mill, it never crushed again.¹²¹ A.C. Macmillan, Airdmillan's founder, entered into a butchering business. His slaughter

¹¹⁶ Ev. A.C. Macmillan, before the Hon. Justice Paul for the claim for compensation of the Burdekin Delta Sugar Co., n.dat., p. 9, Q.S.A., COL/A460. Macmillan's evidence to the Royal Commission into the Sugar Industry in 1889 that the mill had been closed since 1886 is either a printing error or he was mistaken (Q.V.P., 4 (1889): Ev. A.C. Macmillan, p. 238, Q.4950). Another contemporary source also maintained that Airdmillan Mill was closed in 1885 (Pugh's Almanac, 1886, p. 461).

¹¹⁷ P.D.T., 17 January 1885; David Donald to George Drysdale, 3 January 1885, J.C.U., PMR/LB/7, p. 30.

¹¹⁸ G.R. Drysdale to E.M. Young, 25 September 1883, J.C.U., PMR [C.T/1] Box 7, Article 1.

¹¹⁹ T.D.B., 12 November 1887.

¹²⁰ Q.S.A., IPI 11/1.

¹²¹ G.R. Drysdale to Messrs Drysdale Bros. & Co., London, 20 May 1887, J.C.U., PMR/[C.T/1] Box 7, Article 4a; T.D.B., 12 November 1887.

Table 5.8. Growers of Cane for the Lower Burdekin Mills, 1885-1891

Mill	1885	1886	1887	1888	1889	1890	1891
Pioneer	P Mai Wa	P Mai Dr	P Mai	P Mai	P Mai	P Mai	P
Kalamia	P Air Av Tre	P Air Av Tre	P Air Av Tre	P	P	P	P
Seaforth	P Air No	P Air No	P Air	P	P	P	P
Drynie	P Ri	Did not crush	P	NO LONGER OPERATED			

NOTES: P Cane grown on the mill's plantation
 Mai Dr Ahearne's cane from Maidavale
 Dr Colin Munro's cane from Drynie
 Air Airdmillan plantation cane
 Tre William Oliver's cane from Trent
 Av Andrew Lambton's cane from Avaleigh
 No John Scott's cane from Norham
 Ri Windsor Bros.' cane from Ripley
 Wa William Payard's cane from Waterview

Sources: P.M.B., Pioneer Estate's Annual Balance Sheets, 1885-1891;
Pugh's Almanac, 1886, p. 461; Pugh's Almanac (Country
 Directory), 1887, p. 49; Pugh's Almanac (Country Directory),
 1888, p. 53.
T.D.B., 17 November 1887.
 David Donald, Pioneer, to G.R. Drysdale, Melbourne, 17
 October 1885, J.C.U., PMR/LB/7, p. 162.

yards were a short distance from the closed mill. Later, from 1894-1896 he was Chairman of the Ayr Shire Council.¹²²

The drop in the world's sugar price in 1884 suddenly made involvement in the production of sugar a risky business. The mills that were planned for construction on Ripley and Maidavale were never built.¹²³ However, despite the depression in the sugar industry, Colin Munro operated Drynie Mill for the first time in 1885 and not in 1884 as claimed in three sources.¹²⁴ The factory crushed the cane from Drynie and Ripley Estates (see Table 5.8). Drynie Mill did not crush in 1886- Munro's cane was sent to Pioneer. However, it was observed that Drynie Mill operated in 1887 to crush seventy acres of cane (probably rations) that was left on Munro's property.¹²⁵ After 1887 some of Drynie's machinery was sold to the Bundaberg planter, Augustus Barton.¹²⁶ Munro converted the rest of the mill into a condensed milk factory in order to utilize the milk from Drynie's extensive herd of dairy cattle. Munro's condensed milk factory was the first in Australia and operated on the Lower Burdekin until 1890. The plant was then shifted to Cressbrook, near Toogoolawah, where it was worked by Munro until being sold to Nestles.¹²⁷ Munro was also reported to be growing cotton

¹²² T.D.B., 12 November 1887; Fox, The History of Queensland, p. 378; Pugh's Almanac (Country Directory), 1887, p. 49.

¹²³ For mention of the mills that were being planned for erection on Ripley and Maidavale see Planter & Farmer, October 1883, p. 632; and Bailiff of Crown Lands, Bowen, "Report on Portion 431 (Maidavale), Parish of Jarvisfield, 21 October 1884", Q.S.A., LAN/AG810, Application 319e.

¹²⁴ C.H. O'Brien, "History of the Australian Sugar Industry: The Lower Burdekin District Part 1", A.S.J., 44 (1952): 241; C.T. Wood, Sugar Country, p. 19; Donnelly, The Port of Townsville, p. 31.

¹²⁵ T.D.B., 17 November 1887.

¹²⁶ Barton re-erected this machinery with additions at Woongarra outside Bundaberg. This new mill was called Mon Repos; known today as Qunaba (Janette Nolan, Bundaberg: History and People (Brisbane: Uni. of Queensland Press, 1978), p. 103.

¹²⁷ N.Q.R., 19 September 1938, p. 62.

on Drynie in the late 1880s. It appears he engaged in various activities after abandoning sugar cultivation.¹²⁸

The other three Lower Burdekin mills and plantations managed to survive the late 1880s and continued operating into the 1890s. However, only Pioneer remained controlled by the owners it had in 1884. By 1887 the mortgagor of Kalamia and Seaforth, the A.N.Z.M. Co., had taken over the lands and assets of the mills,¹²⁹ although Charles Young and James Mackenzie were kept on as managers. The retaining of the services of the former owners of the estates and mills was, according to Saunders, a common practice in the late 1880s.¹³⁰

Pioneer, Kalamia and Seaforth Mills were primarily supplied between 1885 and 1891 by cane grown on their associated plantations, although a few of the district's smaller growers did manage to supply the mills up until 1887 (see Table 5.8). However, after 1887 it appears that most of the smaller farmers abandoned growing sugar, for James Mackenzie and Charles Young told the 1889 Royal Commission that there were now no small growers of cane supplying their mills.¹³¹ Both men, in conjunction with A.C. Macmillan, told the Commission that they had tried to lease parts of their estates to small growers, but could not succeed in getting anyone to take the blocks.¹³²

Overall, it appears in the late 1880s that most of the small farmers on the Lower Burdekin grew maize, which was usually sold to the

¹²⁸ Townsville Herald, 17 August 1889, p. 26.

¹²⁹ T.T.O., Vols. 20/189, 114/93.

¹³⁰ Saunders, Workers in Bondage, pp. 52, 54.

¹³¹ Q.V.P., 4 (1889): Ev. Charles Young, p. 236, Q.4856; Ev. James Mackenzie, p. 241, Q.5069.

¹³² Q.V.P., 4 (1889): Ev. Charles Young, p. 236, Q.4857; Ev. A.C. Macmillan, p. 239, Q.4969; Ev. James Mackenzie, p. 241, Q.5074.

plantations.¹³³ Indeed, maize was the crop with the second highest acreage under cultivation on the Lower Burdekin was in the late 1880s (see Table 5.9). However, like the planters, the small growers of maize were also troubled by poor shipping arrangements. A letter to the Townsville Herald in 1890 from a Lower Burdekin farmer complained of the inability of the maize growers to secure steamers to transport their crops to the Townsville market. Consequently, they were forced to sell to the planters at a lower price than could be fetched at Townsville.¹³⁴

Table 5.9. Crop Acreages on the Lower Burdekin, 1886-1891

Year	Total Land Cultivated	Fallow	Sugar Cane	Maize	Other
1886	5201	587	3591	742	281
1887	5148	763	3703	479	203
1888	3897	1198	2050	564	85
1889	4542	645	2545	1209	143
1890	4962	959	2937	865	201
1891	5626	686	3610	1092	238

Source: Assembled from figures provided in the Queensland Statistical Registers, 1886-1891.

The success of cane growing on the Lower Burdekin in the late 1880s was heavily dependent on irrigation. As mentioned previously, both Pioneer and Airdmillan plantations irrigated their cane in 1884. During 1885, another year of low rainfall (see Table 3.4), significant developments occurred in extending irrigation in the district. At Kalamia, Young Bros. commenced irrigation for the first time, probably using their Fowler steam engines to drive centrifugal pumps that drew water from

¹³³ T.D.B., 3 November 1887; Extract from the Report of Mr. F. Goodfellow, Land Commissioner, Townsville, Q.V.P., 3 (1890): 227; P.D.T., 7 February 1891.

¹³⁴ Townsville Herald, 25 November 1890, p. 16.

Lilliesmere Lagoon.¹³⁵ On Pioneer, the wells were most likely still used, but the situation must have become desperate, for George Drysdale wrote in September that he had instructed the brick layers to build a drain to take the mill's waste water to the cane.¹³⁶ This action was followed in November by the announcement that an eight inch centrifugal pump was to be erected on Sheep Station Creek to pump water to the crops.¹³⁷ It is interesting to note that the 1885 drought, which encouraged the Lower Burdekin planters to extend their irrigation, was also the cause of the beginning of irrigation at Bundaberg, where it was also found to be too dry for cane cultivation.¹³⁸

In 1886 irrigation on the Lower Burdekin was extended even further. The cane at Seaforth plantation was irrigated for the first time after a fifteen inch pump had been installed.¹³⁹ At Pioneer two, eight inch pumps were now in operation, irrigation channels were under construction and a permanent flume had been erected from Sheep Station Creek to carry the water to the crops.¹⁴⁰ However, the most significant development with regard to irrigation on the Lower Burdekin in 1886 was the arrival of John Drysdale,¹⁴¹ who replaced his brother George as

¹³⁵ Q.V.P., 4 (1889): Ev. Charles Young, p. 235, Q.4832; p. 236, Q.4889.

¹³⁶ G.R. Drysdale to E.M. Young, 12 September 1885, J.C.U., PMR/LB/7, p. 34.

¹³⁷ G.R. Drysdale to E.M. Young, 21 November 1885, J.C.U., PMR/LB/7, p. 181.

¹³⁸ Kerr, Southern Sugar Saga, pp. 62-63.

¹³⁹ Pugh's Almanac (Country Directory), 1887, p. 49; Queenslander, 9 October 1886, p. 592.

¹⁴⁰ David Donald to G.R. Drysdale, 1 June 1886, J.C.U., PMR/LB/7, p. 230; Townsville Herald, 19 November 1887.

¹⁴¹ For details on John Drysdale's life see Roy Connolly, John Drysdale and the Burdekin (Sydney: Ure Smith, 1964); Fox, The History of Queensland, pp. 711-715; N.Q.R., 21 May 1928, p. 15; and Ian Robertson, "John Drysdale, 1846-1928"; A.S.J., 67 (1975): 154-155.

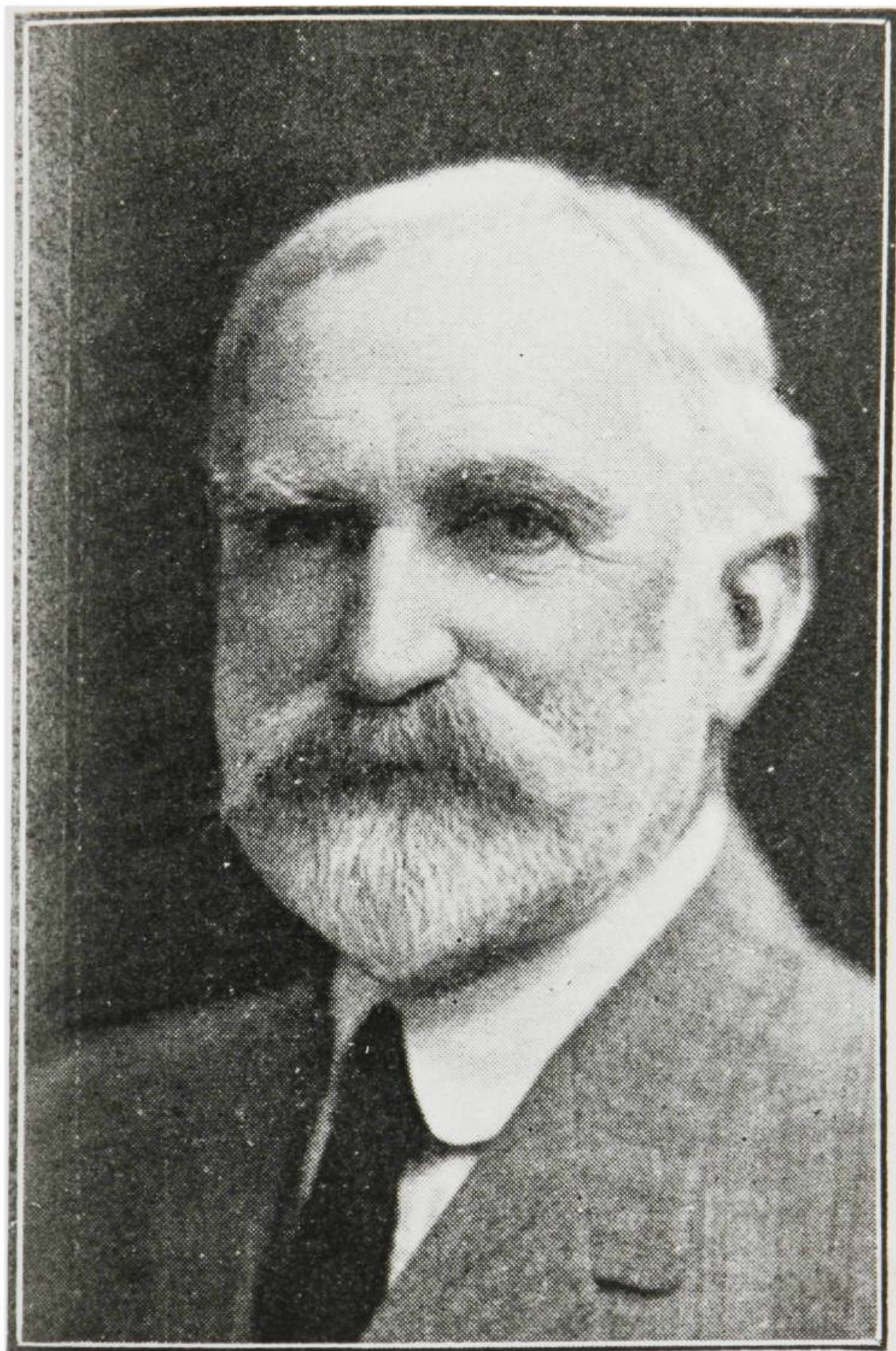


Plate 6 John Drysdale. Date unknown.

Photo: Courtesy of John Oxley Library.

Managing Director. Bolton's claim that John Drysdale arrived on the Lower Burdekin in 1884 is therefore incorrect.¹⁴²

Being a civil engineer John Drysdale set about the task of improving and streamlining Pioneer's irrigation facilities. In late 1887 it was reported that there were now three pumping stations on Pioneer plantation - two on Sheep Station Creek and one on the banks of the lagoon in front of the Manager's residence. A fifteen inch pump had also been installed to assist in pumping the water into the flume that took it to the cane cultivated near the mill.¹⁴³ Under Drysdale's direction, further improvements to the irrigation system continued during 1888. A low level water carrier from the fifteen inch pump to the end of the mill lagoon was installed so that the water needed for the second pumping station had only to be lifted nine to eleven feet in place of twenty-five to twenty-seven feet. It was possible now to connect the mill pump by means of pipes to the lagoon. When not irrigating, one day's pumping with the fifteen inch pump kept the mill going a fortnight. The main flume was lowered about four feet, thereby relieving the pump of this extra lift. Another flume was constructed to facilitate easier watering of distant paddocks. Overall, 1,020 acres could be irrigated.¹⁴⁴

Irrigation facilities were also being improved at Kalamia in this period. By 1887 two, twelve inch and one, eight inch centrifugal pumps were in operation. Water was now conveyed along a galvanized iron fluming to the main channel which was six feet wide and cut along the high land beside the fields. Parallel to this drain were smaller, three feet wide drains. Altogether twelve to fourteen miles of drains were reported to be in existence.¹⁴⁵ Despite such an irrigation system, Charles Young told the 1889 Royal Commission that even though they could irrigate the whole of their cultivation, it could not be done "quite as often" as they would have preferred. As such, it was their intention

¹⁴² Bolton, A Thousand Miles Away, p. 237.

¹⁴³ Townsville Herald, 19 November 1887.

¹⁴⁴ G.R. Drysdale to Messrs. Drysdale Bros., London, 23 April 1889, J.C.U., PMR/[C.T/1] Box 7, Article 7.

¹⁴⁵ T.D.B., 12 November 1887.

to obtain more pumping power and to extend their operations so that 800 acres could be irrigated.¹⁴⁶

Seaforth plantation was the only other locality where any significant irrigation was carried out at this time. By 1888 three different pumping stations were now working on the estate, compared to one in 1886. However, unlike Pioneer and Kalamia, Seaforth suffered from a deficiency of water. James Mackenzie told the 1889 Royal Commission that only one of the pumps had a full supply.¹⁴⁷

In early 1889 an important development with regard to the future of irrigation in the district occurred, for it was reported that a row of perforated tubes had been sunk into the ground on Pioneer Estate to test if underground water could be obtained from the gravel drifts. The experiments were carried out to ascertain if a cheap method could be found to irrigate land too far from the lagoons on the estate.¹⁴⁸ An earlier report in 1886 claimed that the Managing Partner at Pioneer (obviously John Drysdale) was about to tap the underground waters to see if he could extend the irrigation on the plantation.¹⁴⁹ It appears from the juxtaposition of these two reports that it either took Drysdale around two years to work out the principle of the Abyssinian spear pump¹⁵⁰ with an inner lining of steel gauze to exclude the finer gravel of the drifts or although stating he was about to begin his experiments in 1886, he never proceeded with the matter until early 1889. Whatever the case, both Connolly and Bolton claim John Drysdale discovered the principle of spear

¹⁴⁶ Q.V.P., 4 (1889): Ev. Charles Young, p. 235, Q.4835; Ev. John Young, p. 237, Q.4917.

¹⁴⁷ Q.V.P., 4 (1889): Ev. James Mackenzie, p. 241, Qs. 5036, 5037.

¹⁴⁸ G.R. Drysdale to Drysdale Bros., London, 23 April 1889, J.C.U., PMR/[C.T/1] Box 7, Article 7.

¹⁴⁹ Queenslander, 9 October 1886, p. 592.

¹⁵⁰ An Abyssinian or Naughton tube well was simply a method by which water was reached by driving or screwing a tube through the ground to the water level. Connolly suggests that the idea was a British invention in use by the late 1870s (Connolly, John Drysdale and the Burdekin, p. 77).

irrigation on the Lower Burdekin.¹⁵¹ However, a letter to the Editor of the North Queensland Register in September 1938,¹⁵² from a W.M. Braby, maintained that Henry Braby¹⁵³ planned and developed the principle of spear irrigation on the Lower Burdekin. Unfortunately, it was not possible to verify or refute this claim. What is certain, however, is that in all the material examined for this thesis, nowhere does John Drysdale himself claim to be the discoverer of the principle of spear irrigation on the Lower Burdekin. This fact in itself may not be significant, as Drysdale committed little to paper. Secondly, Henry Braby was the consulting engineer for the Lower Burdekin mills in this period, so he may have been approached by Drysdale about the design of the spears. Whatever the true situation, the spears became the basis of a series of independent pumping units that allowed irrigation to become widespread on the Lower Burdekin by the 1920s. Indeed, spears remain the basis of much of the irrigation on the Lower Burdekin today.

Unfortunately the records relating to the Lower Burdekin between 1888 and 1892 are very sketchy, so it is not possible to comment in any great depth on the initial use of spears in the district. Certainly by 1892 they were being used by Drysdale Bros. on Pioneer plantation (although to what extent could not be determined) and in early 1893 they were observed on Kalamia plantation.¹⁵⁴ In addition to installing spears, it is reasonable to assume that all the Lower Burdekin plantations in the late

¹⁵¹ Connolly, John Drysdale and the Burdekin, p. 76; Bolton, A Thousand Miles Away, p. 237.

¹⁵² N.Q.R., 24 September 1938, p. 92.

¹⁵³ An engineer who is reputed to have supervised the erection of most of the sugar mills on the Lower Burdekin, at Mackay and at Rockhampton. Braby patented many inventions related to sugar mill machinery, including a contrivance for drying megass on its way from the last set of rollers to the boiler furnaces, a maceration for extracting sugar from megass after it passed from the first rollers and an automatic megass conveyor and mechanical stoker (Newspaper clipping from the Leeds Mercury, 1893, held in the vertical files at James Cook University, under the heading 'Burdekin Region'. See also Connolly, John Drysdale and the Burdekin, pp. 52, 72, 114, 199-200.

¹⁵⁴ N.Q.H., 10 August 1892, p. 25; Charles Young, Kalamia, to R.J. Jeffray, Melbourne, 12 April 1893, Young Ms., Private Letterbook, p. 5.

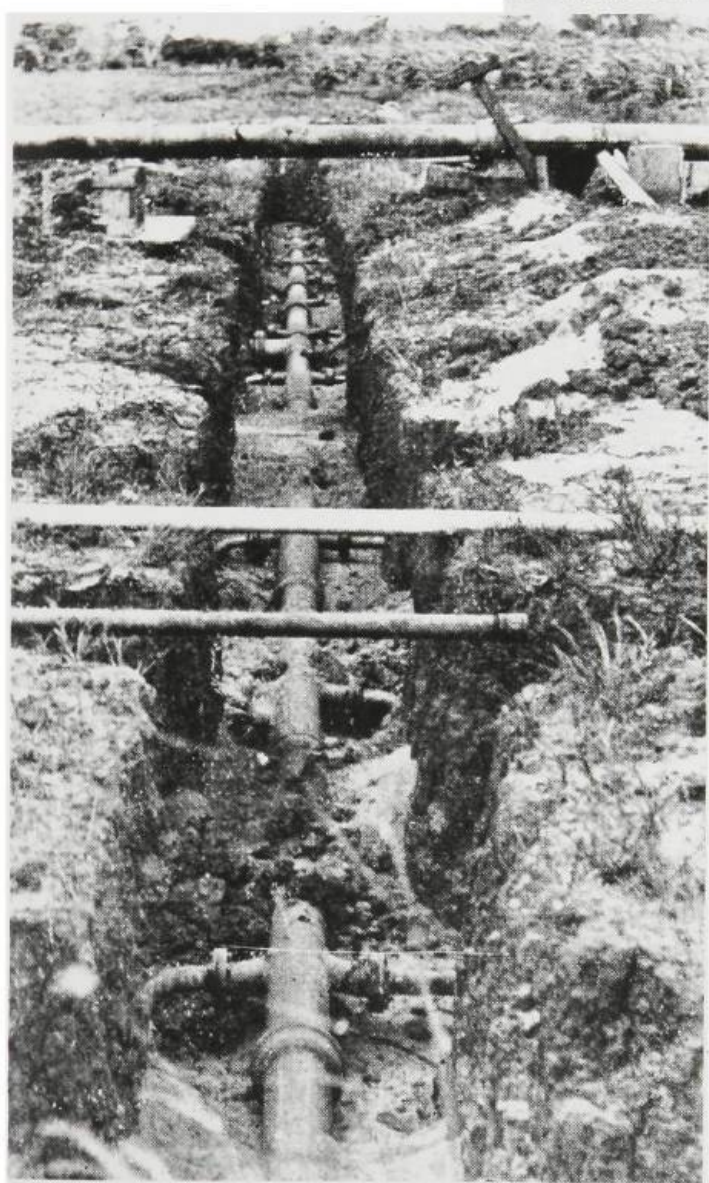
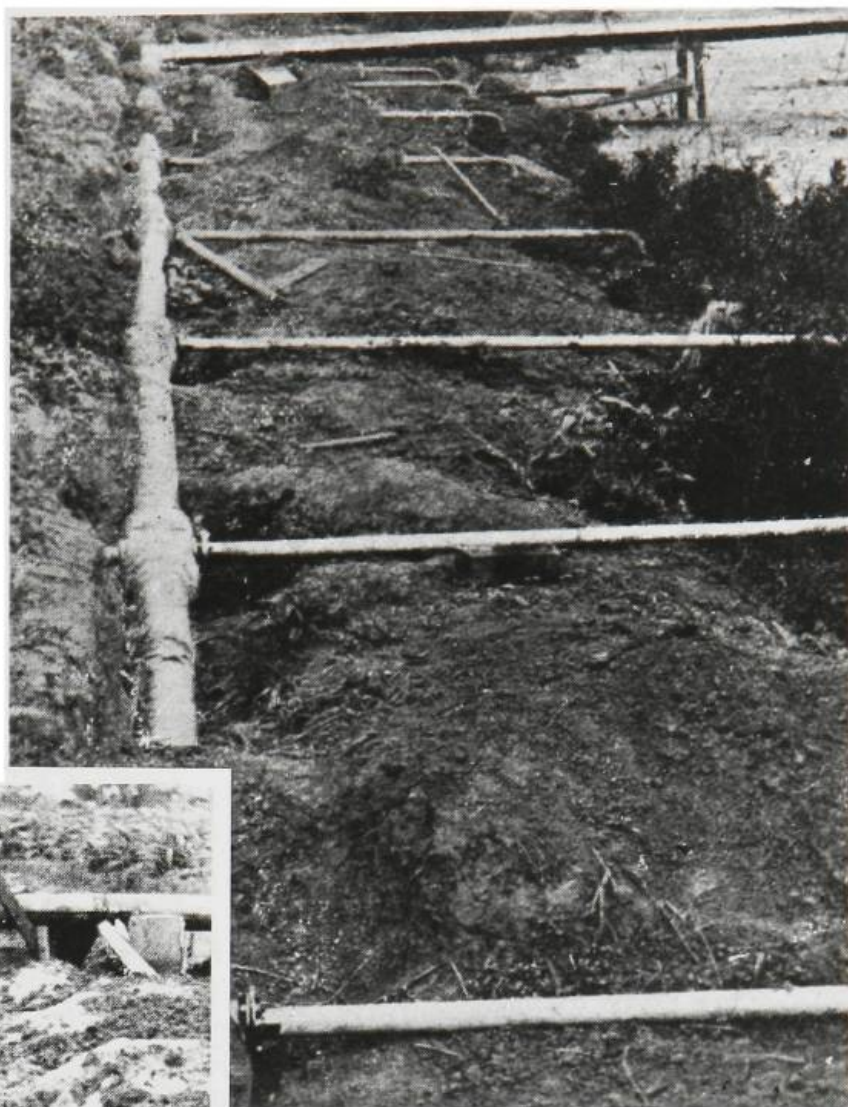


Plate 7 Two views of suction pipes and
spear wells on the Lower Burdekin,
1910.

Photos: A.S.J., 8 December 1910, p. 389.

1880s continued to improve their pumps and irrigation drains, so as to ensure that the maximum area could be watered.

Attempts to overcome the problem of low and variable rainfall, however, did not protect the Lower Burdekin planters from the droughts which periodically affected the region. For instance, in 1885 and 1888, two years of low rainfall (see Table 3.4), the Lower Burdekin's sugar output fell compared to other years (see Table 5.7). The effects of the droughts were also carried over into the following year with reduced sugar outputs; a consequence of a loss of cane and reduced plantings.

A difficult climate was not the only problem that faced the planters in the late 1880s. Labour shortages continued to hamper operations. As mentioned earlier, by late 1884 all the Lower Burdekin plantations were short of workers. However, the problem was exacerbated in May 1885 when the government, after receiving the report of the Royal Commission appointed to examine the circumstances under which certain labourers had been introduced into Queensland from New Guinea, decided that the Melanesians who had been brought illegally to Queensland on the Lizzie, Hopeful, Sybil, Forest King and Ceara, should be returned to their former islands. All the Lower Burdekin plantations had received Pacific Islanders from these ships during 1884.¹⁵⁵ Consequently, 145 Pacific Islanders were removed by government agents from the Lower Burdekin in late May 1885.¹⁵⁶

Under the Pacific Islander Employers Compensation Act of 1885, planters who had been deprived of the services of their labourers were compensated eventually in 1886 for losses associated with production. However, this compensation did little to ease the problems that were experienced by the Lower Burdekin planters in late 1885 due to their shortage of labour. In June 1885 it was recorded there were only 162 Pacific Islanders on Pioneer. This number was well below the estimated 240 Pacific Islanders needed to run the plantation effectively. Similarly, at Kalamia only 120 Pacific Islanders were recorded as being employed.

¹⁵⁵ J. Buckland et al., "Report and Minutes of Evidence of the Royal Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Circumstances under which Labourers have been brought into Queensland from New Guinea and other Islands", Q.V.P., 2 (1885): 968-987.

¹⁵⁶ Sydney Morning Herald, 2 June 1885.

Once again this number was well below the estimated 190 Pacific Islanders needed to operate the plantation.¹⁵⁷ The reduced number of labourers had an impact on the season's crushing operations. At Kalamia, there was a shortage of firewood and the mill was forced to make only six tons of sugar a day instead of nine tons, because the cane could not be harvested fast enough to keep the factory fully supplied.¹⁵⁸ At Pioneer, the mill had stopped crushing in September to send its mill workers into the fields:

to heap and burn a lot of cane tops where ratoons were shooting up and to run through a block of young cane and cut down the thistles.¹⁵⁹

Despite the labour shortages in late 1885, at least Drysdale Bros. tried to continue grubbing new land to expand their acreage under cultivation. This was accomplished in part by borrowing a "mob of Chinese" from Colin Munro.¹⁶⁰ However, the planters' inability to attend to cultivation meant there were four hundred acres less under sugar-cane on the Lower Burdekin in 1886 than in 1885 (see Table 5.1). Indeed, the Hon. Justice Paul, hearing the claims of the Lower Burdekin planters for compensation due to the action by the Crown in removing their Melanesian labourers in May 1885, judged that the planters were forced to throw out of cultivation at least 350 acres of land which was being

¹⁵⁷ Q.S.A., IPI 11/1. Estimates of the number of Melanesian workers needed to run plantations were provided by the planters giving evidence before a magistrate as part of their claim for compensation under the Pacific Islander Employers Compensation Act of 1885 (Refer to court transcripts in Q.S.A., COL/A460).

¹⁵⁸ Ev. Charles Young, before the Hon. Justice Paul for the claim for compensation of Young Bros., Kalamia, 12 February 1886, p. 5, Q.S.A., COL/A460.

¹⁵⁹ David Donald to G.R. Drysdale, 12 September 1885, J.C.U., PMR/LB/7, p. 133.

¹⁶⁰ David Donald to G.R. Drysdale, 26 September 1885; David Donald to G.R. Drysdale, 31 October 1885, J.C.U., PMR/LB/7, pp. 144, 173.

prepared for planting with cane in 1885 due to the removal of their Melanesian labourers in May 1885.¹⁶¹

The labour situation improved in 1886, so that by the end of the year at least Kalamia and Seaforth had more Pacific Island labourers on their plantations than they did in December 1885 (see Table 5.10). Indeed, it was reported in October 1886 that:

In consequence of being able to get plenty of Kanakas and Malay labour great expansions have been made at Seaforth and Pioneer.¹⁶²

This improvement in the number of workers was reflected by a small increase in the acreage cultivated with cane on the Lower Burdekin in 1887 (see Table 5.1).

The increased availability of labour in 1886 was, however, only temporary. During 1887 another shortage of workers on the Lower Burdekin was reported as causing:

- (a) 1,000 tons of cane to be left on Maidavale, unharvested;
- (b) a two month delay in cane watering at Kalamia;
- (c) on average, only three-quarters of a full day's work to be done at Pioneer Mill during the crushing season; and
- (d) a delay in cultivating new ground, extending the irrigation system and fertilizing the fields at Seaforth.¹⁶³

Indeed, labour was so short during the 1887 crushing season on the Lower Burdekin that up to sixty Europeans were employed to cart cane (usually a Pacific Islander's job) on Pioneer and at Seaforth, by November, James Mackenzie was again reported as employing Aborigines,

¹⁶¹ Judgement by the Hon. Justice Paul, in the matter of the claims for compensation by Messrs. Drysdale Bros., Young Bros., James Mackenzie and the Burdekin Delta Sugar Co. under the Pacific Employers Compensation Act of 1885, 22 March 1886, Q.S.A., COL/A460, In-letter 2141 of 1886.

¹⁶² Queenslander, 9 October 1886, p. 592.

¹⁶³ T.D.B., 3 November 1887; T.D.B., 12 November 1887; T.D.B., 17 November 1887; Q.V.P., 4 (1889): Ev. James Mackenzie, p. 241, Q.5065.

Table 5.10. The Number of Melanesians Employed on the Lower Burdekin Estates, 1884-1892

Employer/Estate	May 1884	Dec. 1885	Dec. 1886	1887	1888	Dec. 1889	Dec. 1890	Dec. 1891	Dec. 1892
A.C.Macmillan, Airdmillan	366	191	7	7	5	3	4	3	3
Drysdale Bros. & Co., Pioneer.	183	224	193	157	230	260	314	287	220
Young Bros. & Co., Kalamia	195	118	153	86	139	184	185	238	133
R.W. Graham, Lilliesmere.	-*	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
E. Scott, Norham.	7	8	6	-	-	-	-	-	-
J. Ahearne, Maidavale.	16	20	7	7	3	-	4	-	2
J. Mackenzie, Seaforth.	141	72	132	95	149	175	132	143	131
W. Oliver, Trent.	-	2	5	2	1	1	-	-	-
C. Munro, Drynie.	14	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
R. Jack, Fernlea.	7	7	7	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	929	657	510	354	527	623	639	671	489

* Indicates nothing was recorded.

Sources: 1884: Inspector of Pacific Islanders, Townsville, to the Immigration Agent, Brisbane, 29 May 1884, Q.S.A., COL/A404, In-letter 2327 attached to In-letter 7284 of 1884.
 1885, 1886, 1889-1892: Q.S.A., IPI 11/1.
 1887, 1888: Q.V.P., 4 (1889): 426, Appendix 14.

despite receiving a small consignment of Pacific Islanders in October.¹⁶⁴ One of the consequences of this labour shortage in 1887 was another fall in the acreage under cane cultivation in 1888 (see Table 5.1).

The labour situation for the Lower Burdekin planters improved again in 1888 due to the increased availability of Melanesian workers (see Table 5.10). However, despite this improvement the Lower Burdekin planters were despondent in early 1889 when interviewed by the Royal Commission investigating the condition of Queensland's sugar industry. Charles Young and James Mackenzie both informed the Commissioners that it was envisaged operations would cease on their plantations after December 1890 because of the government's legislation prohibiting the importation of Melanesian workers to the colony after 1890.¹⁶⁵ All the Lower Burdekin planters interviewed reported difficulties in obtaining new Pacific Island labourers, complained of the high cost of recruiting workers and maintained that Europeans would not and were incapable of working satisfactorily on the plantations.¹⁶⁶ The Lower Burdekin planters suggested that the government stopped showing antagonistic feelings towards Melanesian labour recruitment and assist them by establishing recruiting depots on the islands staffed by doctors to ensure they received healthy "boys".¹⁶⁷ John Drysdale stressed this latter point by stating that Pioneer received seventy-eight Pacific Islanders in early 1887, but twenty-three were dead within ten months after their arrival. This was a heavy loss.¹⁶⁸ In addition, John Young and John Drysdale both

¹⁶⁴ Q.V.P., 4 (1889): Ev. John Drysdale, p. 243, Q.5110; T.D.B., 3 November 1887; T.D.B., 22 November 1887.

¹⁶⁵ Q.V.P., 4 (1889): Ev. Charles Young, p. 235, Q.4883; Ev. James Mackenzie, p. 241, Q.5059.

¹⁶⁶ Q.V.P., 4 (1889): Ev. Charles Young, p. 235, Q. 4873, p. 236, Qs. 4876, 4883; Ev. James Mackenzie, p. 240, Q. 5023, p. 242, Q. 5074; Ev. John Drysdale, p. 244, Q. 5158.

¹⁶⁷ Q.V.P., 4 (1889): Ev. Charles Young, p. 235, Q.4875; Ev. John Young, p. 237, Q.4906; Ev. James Mackenzie, p. 247, Q.5074; Ev. John Drysdale, p. 244, Q.5158.

¹⁶⁸ Q.V.P., 4 (1889): Ev. John Drysdale, p. 244, Q.5157.

thought the government could specifically assist the Lower Burdekin planters by providing irrigation facilities.¹⁶⁹

Despite the gloom in 1888, over 100 Pacific Islanders were recruited for the Lower Burdekin each year between 1889 and 1891.¹⁷⁰ This labour ensured that the district's planters had a sufficient workforce to maintain operations. Indeed, from 1889-1891 Pioneer, Kalamia and Seaforth had their full complements of Pacific Island labourers that were estimated as necessary to run the plantations efficiently (see Table 5.10). As a result of this improved labour situation, the acreage under cane increased each year, so that 3,610 acres were under cane in 1891; a return to the 1884 level when Airdmillan plantation operated (see Table 5.1).

The recovery in the industry's fortunes on the Lower Burdekin in the late 1880s was overshadowed, however, by the need of the planters to find an alternative labour source; Premier Griffith, as mentioned earlier, having introduced legislation in 1885 which prohibited the recruitment of Melanesians to Queensland after December 1890. In an attempt to avoid unnecessary labour shortages once Melanesians could not be obtained, the Lower Burdekin and Herbert River planters agreed in September 1890 to send the Townsville businessman, C.V. Fraire, to Italy, where he would secure labourers for the canefields from the farming districts of Lombardy and Piedmont.¹⁷¹ It was envisaged that after two years service the Italians would be entitled to lease or purchase a small holdings, and could set up as cane growers under an assured contract to the mill. Indeed, Charles Young wrote that he hoped the:

Piedmontese labourers may, after they have seen a season's operations carried out, take the land on terms and eventually

¹⁶⁹ Q.V.P., 4 (1889): Ev. John Young, p. 237, Q.4906; Ev. John Drysdale, p. 242, Q.5074.

¹⁷⁰ See the Annual Reports of the Department of Pacific Island Immigration, 1889-1891, in Q.V.P.

¹⁷¹ Bolton, A Thousand Miles Away, p. 202.

buy it, and so enable the present owners to get out of sugar growing altogether.¹⁷²

It took Fraire a considerable time to recruit emigrants to the required number, and it was December 1891 before the Jumma landed 248 Italians at Brisbane.¹⁷³ In mid-February 1892 it was reported the Italians were at last employed on the Lower Burdekin and Herbert River plantations.¹⁷⁴ However, the experiment in using Italian labourers met with no great success. Unsettled by reports of higher wages on the gold fields and in Townsville, many of the Italians broke their engagements with the Lower Burdekin planters. Some turned up in Charters Towers, destitute.¹⁷⁵ Fortunately for the Lower Burdekin planters, Premier Griffith announced in early February 1892, even before the Italians had left their employment on the plantations, that Melanesians could again be recruited to Queensland. The industry's labour force was secure for at least the early part of the 1890s.

5.6 PLANTATION CHARACTERISTICS

During the 1880s and for much of the 1890s, as will be shown in the next chapter, sugar-cane was primarily grown on the Lower Burdekin on plantations. Up until this point little attention has been paid to the spatial, social and economic characteristics of the sugar plantations formed in Queensland between 1879-1885. Much has been written on defining or establishing the attributes of plantations and it is not within the framework of this thesis to review such a large amount of literature.¹⁷⁶ However, for the purposes of this thesis it was decided to

¹⁷² Charles Young, Kalamia, to the Chief Secretary, Brisbane, 12 September 1890. Reproduced in Q.V.P., 4 (1891): 5.

¹⁷³ Q.S.A., IMM/124 (Micro 29, p. 311).

¹⁷⁴ N.Q.H., 24 February 1892, p. 19.

¹⁷⁵ N.Q.H., 2 March 1892; B.L. Barnett, Consul for Italy, to the Colonial Secretary, Brisbane, 26 February 1892, Q.S.A., COL/A690, Telegram 02112 attached to In-letter 3067 of 1892.

¹⁷⁶ For excellent reviews of the literature relating to plantation definitions see B. Higman, "Plantations and Typological Problems in Geography", Australian Geographer, 11 (1969): 192-203 and P.P. Courtenay,

accept a modified version of six criteria used by Prunty in identifying plantations. Prunty's criteria were as follows:

- (a) large areal size;
- (b) specialized production;
- (c) large inputs of cultivating power;
- (d) a distinct division of labour and management;
- (e) the distinctive spatial organization of settlements and land use, reflecting to a high degree, centralized control of cultivating power; and
- (f) location in some areas of the south with a plantation tradition.¹⁷⁷

It was decided that one of these criteria, namely (c), could be expanded; that (d) and (e) could be combined; and that (f) could be modified to take into account that the sugar plantations in Australia were located in the north, not the south. With the addition of two new criteria, seven criteria emerged as attributes which could be used in identifying sugar plantations in Queensland between 1878-1885. These criteria were as follows:

- (1) financial backing from metropolises, especially London, Sydney and Melbourne;
- (2) large areal size;
- (3) specialized production;
- (4) large inputs of cultivating power and industrial power - that is, vertical integration;
- (5) a distinct division of labour and management which was reflected in the spatial organization of the plantations;
- (6) a tendency to assume the functions of towns and replace them in the urban hierarchy; and
- (7) location in the north of Australia, especially in the coastal tropical areas of Queensland.

On the basis of these six criteria, it was possible to conclude that Pioneer, Airdmillan, Kalamia and Seaforth operated as plantations in 1884. Despite one contemporary author claiming that Colin Munro was "one of

"An Approach to the Definition of the Plantation", Geographia Polonica, 19 (1970): 81-90.

¹⁷⁷ M. Prunty, "The Woodland Plantation as a Contemporary Occupance Type in the South", Geographical Review, 53 (1963): 2.

the largest sugar growers in the district",¹⁷⁸ Drynie could not be classified as a plantation using the six criteria listed above. Nor could Trent, Maidavale, Ripley or Norham. Each estate, however, had some attributes of a plantation, namely large areal size and some division of labour and management. Drynie was even vertically integrated after its mill was erected. On the other hand, none had large inputs of cultivating power that resulted in hundreds of acres cultivated with cane, or assumed the functions of small towns. Nevertheless, each, especially Drynie which had a mill and Maidavale and Ripley on which it was planned to erect a mill could have developed into plantations, except that the drop in sugar prices in 1884 ended their growth. Overall, it would be more appropriate to term the owners of Trent, Ripley, Maidavale and Drynie as small growers of cane. Their estates were large, like plantations, but operations were not on a plantation scale.

Of the seven criteria used to identify a plantation in Queensland in the late 1870s and 1880s, all with exception of the last attribute, will now be examined separately, with specific reference to the Lower Burdekin.

Financial Backing

According to Higman, the plantations established in northern New South Wales in the early 1880s provided an outlet for metropolitan capital.¹⁷⁹ Similarly, investment in the Queensland sugar industry at this time, particularly by Melbourne financiers, almost rivalled pastoral investment.¹⁸⁰ The Lower Burdekin plantations received their financial support from the A.N.Z.M.Co. which provided the capital for Seaforth,

¹⁷⁸ Archibald Stirling, The Never Never Land: A Ride in North Queensland (London: William Cloves and Sons Ltd., 1884), p. 99.

¹⁷⁹ Higman, "Sugar Plantations and Yeoman Farming in New South Wales", p. 702.

¹⁸⁰ Geoffrey Serle, The Rush To Be Rich (Melbourne: Melbourne Uni. Press, 1971), p. 50. Plantations financed by Victorian syndicates in the early 1880s included: Gairloch; Hamleigh; Macknade; Victoria; Hambledon; Pyramid; Oakenden; Pioneer (Mackay); and Pleystowe. For discussions on Melbourne investment in Queensland's sugar industry at this time, see: Clive Moore, 'Kanaka Maratta: A History of Melanesian Mackay', Ph.D. thesis, J.C.U., 1 (1981): 227-231; Bolton, A Thousand Miles Away, pp. 136-139; and Jones, Trinity Phoenix, pp. 151-153.

Kalamia and Airdmillan plantations and John Scott's small venture into sugar growing on Norham and the Australian Mercantile Land and Finance Co. Ltd. which made funds available for Pioneer. Even though both were London companies, they had offices in Melbourne and it was their representatives, R.J. Jeffray and E.M. Young respectively, both with Melbourne connections, who involved their companies in the plantations. Also, William and George Drysdale, both partners in Drysdale Bros. were appointed to the Australian Mercantile Land and Finance Co. Ltd. in 1884 and 1890 respectively, thus strengthening the links between the two firms.¹⁸¹

Table 5.11. Initial Establishment Costs (in £) of the Lower Burdekin Plantations

Plantation	Mill	Total
Airdmillan	?	approx. 200,000
Pioneer	26,000	96,000
Seaforth	22,000	85-90,000
Kalamia	26,000	90,000

Source: Q.V.P., 4 (1889): Ev. A.C. Macmillan, p. 238, Q.4940; Ev. J. Drysdale, p. 243, Q.5102; Ev. J. Mackenzie, pp. 240, 241, Qs. 5013, 5047; Ev. C. Young, pp. 234, 235, Qs. 4795, 4813; G.R. Drysdale to E.M. Young, 14 May 1884, J.C.U., PMR/[C.T/1] Box 7, Article 2.

The Lower Burdekin plantations represented an initial investment of around £90,000 each, except for Airdmillan which A.C. Macmillan estimated to reflect an initial outlay of £200,000 (see Table 5.11). This investment of such large amounts of capital in plantations was not unusual at this time; for instance, the Melbourne-Mackay Sugar Company invested £250,000 in improvements on its Mackay plantations, C.F. Mackinnon and Co., which had acquired John Spiller's Mackay plantations for £95,000 in the early 1880s anticipated outlaying another £50,000 in improvements, the C.S.R. Co. invested £500,000 in its plantations at Mackay and on the Herbert River, and Swallow and Derham, a leading

¹⁸¹ J.D. Bailey, A Hundred Years of Pastoral Banking: A History of the Australian Mercantile Land & Finance Co., 1863-1963 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), pp. 126, 136.

Melbourne biscuit making firm invested £180,000 in Hambledon plantation near Cairns.¹⁸²

Capital city investment in the Lower Burdekin plantations established urban linkages which were further strengthened by the sale of raw sugar in the major metropolitan centres. Sugar from Pioneer was sold in London, Melbourne, Brisbane and Townsville until 1894. Afterwards Drysdale Bros. sold all their crop to the C.S.R. Co.¹⁸³ Reports in the early 1890s also observed that sugar from Seaforth was sold in Melbourne and sugar produced from Kalamia was sent to London.¹⁸⁴ It is reasonable to assume this was the practice adopted in the 1880s.

Large Areal Size

All the Lower Burdekin plantations were 1,000 acres or more in size. Airdmillan was quite massive, being 12,500 acres in size (see Table 5.12). The largeness of the Lower Burdekin plantations was not uncommon, for example, Hambledon plantation near Cairns was a 6,000 acre estate, Innisfail plantation on the Johnstone River was 2,900 acres in size, and Gairloch plantation on the Herbert River consisted of 4,600 acres.¹⁸⁵

The Lower Burdekin planters, although owning large acreages, only used a fraction of their land to cultivate sugar-cane (see Table 5.12 and Figure 5.7). Only Seaforth came close to having all its land under cultivation. There were reasons, however, for a large part of the estates not being put under crop. The depression in sugar prices after 1884 and labour shortages undoubtedly caused the Lower Burdekin planters to limit the area they cultivated. Also, not all the plantation lands were suitable

¹⁸² Saunders, Workers in Bondage, p. 58; W. Groom et al., "Report of the Royal Commission Appointed to Inquire into the General Condition of the Sugar Industry etc.", Q.V.P., 4 (1889): 62.

¹⁸³ P.M.B., Pioneer Estate's Annual Balance Sheets, 1885-1895.

¹⁸⁴ S.J.T.C., 1, 11 (1892): 256; S.J.T.C., 2, 6 (1893): 149; N.Q.H., 24 January 1894, p. 17.

¹⁸⁵ Q.V.P., 4 (1889): Ev. Thomas Swallow, p. 128, Q.1100; Ev. James O'Halleran, p. 164, Q.2276; Ev. Lewis Cowley, p. 214, Q.4101.

Table 5.12. The Size of the Lower Burdekin Plantations/Estates
versus the Acreage under Cane in 1884 and 1887

Plantation/ Estate	Size (Acres)	Acres under Cane	
		1884	1887
Airdmillan	12323	1600 ¹	?
Pioneer	5064	930 ¹	c. 1100 ⁵
Kalamia	6034	900 ¹	900 ⁶
Avaleigh	1000	40 ²	40 ⁵
Maidavale	1272	130 ²	120 ⁷
Ripley	2560	4 ³	?
Fernlea	640	?	?
Trent	2466	50 ⁴	50 ⁵
Seaforth	1520	710 ¹	?
Norham	2560	?	?
Drynie	2560	?	70 ⁸

Note: ? Acreages could not be located.

- Sources:
1. Sydney Morning Herald, 8 September 1884.
 2. Pugh's Almanac, 1885, p. 433.
 3. Bailiff of Crown Lands, Bowen, "Report on Portion 456, Parish of Jarvisfield, 6 March 1884", Q.S.A., LAN/AG811, Application 330g.
 4. Bailiff of Crown Lands, Bowen, "Report on Portion 459, Parish of Jarvisfield", Q.S.A., LAN/AG811, Application 330J.
 5. Pugh's Almanac (Country Directory), 1888, p. 53.
 6. T.D.B., 12 November 1887.
 7. T.D.B., 11 November 1887; Pugh's Almanac (Country Directory), 1888, p. 53.
 8. T.D.B., 17 November 1887.

for agriculture. Young Bros., for instance, were required to grow most of their cane in the eastern section of Kalamia, for the remainder of the lands were swampy (see Figure 5.7).

Specialized Production

All the Lower Burdekin plantations primarily grew sugar-cane; there was no other cash crop cultivated, except on Airdmillan where mangoes and lemons were grown in an orchard leased by the Young Bros.¹⁸⁶ Indeed, A.C. Macmillan and Charles Young both told the Royal Commission in 1889 that it was impossible to engage in any other tropical agriculture because it was so difficult to get the produce in a fit state to the markets in Townsville for want of railway communication, while James Mackenzie observed that flying foxes made the district unsuitable for the production of tropical fruits.¹⁸⁷

Although sugar was the main crop grown on the plantations, other crops were cultivated. For instance, maize was grown on Pioneer in 1889 and used to feed the horses, while at Kalamia, potatoes and corn were cultivated in 1885 and 1887, but once again used only to feed the plantation's workforce.¹⁸⁸

Vertical Integration

Plantations of the 1880s were often fully integrated units; that is, cane was grown on the plantation, crushed at the plantation's mill and the raw sugar sold by the planter or his agent. To undertake such operations required, as mentioned earlier, large capital outlays, which were spent in erecting a mill, tramway system and sometimes a wharf and purchasing machinery and implements used in sugar cultivation. To

¹⁸⁶ Q.V.P., 4 (1889): Ev. John Young, p. 237, Q.4920.

¹⁸⁷ Q.V.P., 4 (1889): Ev. John Young, p. 237, Qs. 4920, 4928; Ev. A.C. Macmillan, p. 239, Q.4971; Ev. J. Mackenzie, p. 242, Q.5080.

¹⁸⁸ G.R. Drysdale, to Messrs. Drysdale Bros., London, 23 April 1889, J.C.U., PMR/[C.T/1] Box 7, Article 7; Q.V.P., 4 (1889): Ev. C. Young, p. 234, Q.4790; Ev. Charles Young, before the Hon. Justice Paul, for the claim for compensation of Young Bros., 12 February 1886, p. 2, Q.S.A., COL/A460.

obtain the economies of scale needed to justify such large capital investment, planters secured, as discussed previously, substantial holdings and cultivated large acreages. Plantations were large scale operations.

On the Lower Burdekin, Airdmillan (when in operation), Pioneer, Kalamia and Seaforth were fully vertically integrated units. All grew several hundred acres of cane (see Table 5.12) that required large inputs of cultivating power; that is substantial labour forces and livestock numbers were required to undertake the task. For instance in 1888 there were 75 draught horses, 30 Europeans, 9 Chinese, 50 Malays and 120 Melanesians on Kalamia plantation, while at Pioneer there were 100 draught horses, 36 milking cows, 54 bullocks plus 40 Europeans, 8 Chinese, 7 Cingalese and 241 Melanesian labourers.¹⁸⁹ Both livestock and workers had to be fed and required accommodation. Consequently, on all the Lower Burdekin plantations there were clusters of huts, cottages and barracks around the mill to house the workers, and stables to accommodate the livestock (see Figures 5.7 and 5.8). Also, hospitals to care for the sick Melanesian workers were established on Pioneer, Kalamia, Seaforth and Airdmillan plantations,¹⁹⁰ but no district hospital was constructed as in the case at Mackay and Maryborough.¹⁹¹ Drysdale Bros. even purchased the schooner Lucy and Adelaide, in order to ensure that they could successfully recruit Melanesians for their plantation.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁹ Q.V.P., 4 (1889): Ev. Charles Young, pp. 234, 235, Qs. 4799, 4824; Anon., "Description of Pioneer Estate, 1888", J.C.U., PMR/[C.T/1] Box 7, Article 4.

¹⁹⁰ Brisbane Courier, 28 November 1881; Sydney Morning Herald, 11, September 1884, 15 September 1884; Inspector of Pacific Islanders, Townsville, to the Immigration Agent, Brisbane, 6 May 1884, Q.S.A., COL/A404, In-letter 3494 of 1884.

¹⁹¹ See Kay Saunders, "The Pacific Islander Hospitals in Colonial Queensland: The Failure of Liberal Principles", Journal of Pacific History, 11 (1976): 28-50.

¹⁹² Eric Stevens, "Blackbirding: A Brief History of the South Sea Islands Labour Trade and the Vessels Engaged In It", J. of R.H.S.Q., 4 (1950): 392.

Bakeries, blacksmith's shops, wheelwright departments and engine workshops were also established on the Lower Burdekin plantations.¹⁹³

All the Lower Burdekin plantations had mills, which accounted for a quarter of the initial investment in establishing operations (see Table 5.11). When established in the early 1880s, the Lower Burdekin mills were able to produce between 1,000 and 1,500 tons of sugar a year, except for Drynie which was described as "rather old fashioned and capable of making between 500 and 600 tons of sugar a season".¹⁹⁴ All the Lower Burdekin mills were steam driven, contained some of the latest milling developments such as triple effets, fugals and vacuum pans¹⁹⁵ and, with the exception of Drynie, at some time in the 1880s utilized the Icery process,¹⁹⁶ an up-to-date procedure used to manufacture white sugar crystals.¹⁹⁷ However, none of the Lower Burdekin mills in the 1880s used double crushing or employed chemical analysis of the sugar content of cane, as was the case in some of the C.S.R. Co.'s mills in the late 1880s.¹⁹⁸ Overall, the Lower Burdekin mills were inefficient and wasteful in their practices. None could work night shifts for the want of interior lighting, molasses was dumped, except at Kalamia where it was sometimes fed to the horses, cane was not weighed, except at Seaforth

¹⁹³ Brisbane Courier, 28 November 1881; T.D.B., 17 November 1887; Ev. Charles Young, before the Hon. Justice Paul for the claim for compensation of Young Bros., Kalamia Estate, 12 February 1886, p. 3, Q.S.A., COL/A460; N.Q.R., 17 January 1921, p. 37.

¹⁹⁴ Townsville Herald, 19 September 1887, p. 19.

¹⁹⁵ Planter and Farmer, October 1883, p. 632; Sydney Morning Herald, 11 September 1884; T.D.B., 12 November 1887; Q.V.P., 4 (1889): Ev. C. Young, p. 236, Q. 4864; University of Glasgow Archives, UGD 118, 3/68, pp. 294-300; UGD 118, 3/68, Orders 352-475.

¹⁹⁶ Icery was a chemist working in the Mauritian sugar industry. In 1868 he developed a process in which variable proportions of monosulphite and bisulphite of lime were added to the juice mixture. After the usual defecation with lime, particularly white sugars emerged. He also introduced the use of litmus paper in order to regulate the quantity of lime to be used (Connolly, John Drysdale and the Burdekin, pp. 53-54, quoting an article from The Sugar Cane, 1 February 1870, pp. 86-95).

¹⁹⁷ Mackay Mercury, 13 September 1884; Planter and Farmer, September 1884, p. 163; T.D.B., 3 November 1887; T.D.B., 12 November 1887; G.R. Drysdale to Messrs. Drysdale Bros., London, 6 July 1889, J.C.U., PMR/[C.T/1] Box 7, Article 9.

¹⁹⁸ Lowndes, South Pacific Enterprise, pp. 35-38; Kerr, Pioneer Pageant, p. 130.

from 1887 onwards and megass had to be spread out in the mill yard to dry before it could be used again as fuel in the boiler.¹⁹⁹ Nevertheless, Charles Young told the 1889 Royal Commission that he believed he had an up-to-date mill that utilized the latest labour saving devices, while E.M. Young after inspecting Pioneer in 1885 remarked on the excellence of the mill which he described "as the best in the colony for its capacity".²⁰⁰

Young's pleasure about Pioneer's performance, however, was not shared by John Drysdale, who by 1887 was urging his brother George to convince the London partners to install at Pioneer a variety of new devices. John Drysdale believed Pioneer Mill required a double set of rollers with maceration to improve juice extraction, a set of triple effets to replace the old fashioned evaporating pans and Henry Braby's megass drying contrivance.²⁰¹ The latter two pieces of machinery sought particularly to save the costs associated with the mill's fuel supply, for triple effets reduced the amount of steam required to produce the sugar and Braby's megass drying contrivance abolished the miller's need to spread the megass out in the mill yard to dry before it could be used in the factory's furnaces.²⁰² However, despite John Drysdale's urging, Drysdale Bros. were unable to carry out his suggestions immediately, for their creditor, the Australian Mercantile Land and Finance Co. refused to advance additional funds to the sugar estates they backed in Queensland.²⁰³ It was not until 1892 - after their debts had been reduced substantially - that Drysdale Bros. were able to implement John Drysdale's suggestions concerning the upgrading of Pioneer Mill.

Vertical integration, with its associated large inputs of cultivating and industrial power, was very expensive. For instance, based on figures

¹⁹⁹ P. Fletcher, "The Sugar Industry of Queensland" in Queensland: Its Resources and Institutions (Brisbane: Government Printer, 1886), p. 13; T.D.B., 3 November 1887; Q.V.P., 4 (1889): Ev. C. Young, p. 236, Q.4866; Ev. J. Mackenzie, pp. 240-41, Qs.5012, 5042, 5044, 5067; Ev. J. Drysdale, p. 243, Qs.5097-98.

²⁰⁰ Q.V.P., 4 (1889): Ev. C. Young, p. 236, Q.4863; Connolly, John Drysdale and the Burdekin, p. 69.

²⁰¹ G.R. Drysdale to Messrs. Drysdale Bros. & Co., London, 20 May 1887, J.C.U., PMR/[C.T/1] Box 7, Article 4a.

²⁰² For descriptions of this process see Connolly, John Drysdale and the Burdekin, p. 71.

²⁰³ A.N.U., Archives of Business and Labour, Australian Mercantile, Land and Finance Co., Minute Book, 162/7, p. 113.

provided for Pioneer plantation between 1885 and 1891, over half the running costs were attributable to the necessity to employ such a large workforce (see Table 5.13). The majority of the remaining expenses were associated with upkeep and maintenance of plant and machinery.

Unfortunately, detailed figures on the running costs are not available for the other plantations, except for 1888 when the year's expenses for Kalamia and Seaforth were £9,000 and £10,200 respectively.²⁰⁴ Even though this was less than the £14,439 it cost to operate Pioneer in 1888, it is reasonable to assume that a similar proportion of the year's expenses were spent on labour and maintenance at Kalamia and Seaforth.

Labour and Management Division

According to Saunders, a distinct social hierarchy existed on sugar plantations, based on skin colour and occupation.²⁰⁵ At the top of this 'social pyramid' was the planter, usually a Scot or Englishman. Beneath the owner was the plantation manager (often a failed planter), who supervised the running of the estate. Below the manager came a variety of skilled European positions - mill manager, cane inspector, field overseer and sugar boiler. Other skilled and semi-skilled European occupations included clerks, ploughmen, blacksmiths and centrifugal operators. At the bottom of the 'social pyramid', beneath what Saunders termed the 'colour line', came skilled coloured workers (e.g. Cingalese and Japanese who attended the boilers) and unskilled coloured labourers (e.g. Melanesians who thrashed, weeded, cut and carted cane).

The class relationships or social hierarchy on a plantation were expressed in the morphology of its settlement pattern. This is well illustrated in Figure 5.8, which shows Pioneer plantation's sugar boiler's house and other huts, presumably accommodating the European staff, set apart from the Melanesian and Malay camps. In addition, a smaller cluster of houses, offices and a hut were located further away from the mill. It is reasonable to assume these buildings included the houses for

²⁰⁴ Q.V.P., 4 (1889): Ev. Charles Young, p. 234, Q.4797; Ev. James Mackenzie, p. 240, Q.5015; Ev. John Drysdale, p. 243, Q.5104.

²⁰⁵ Saunders, Workers in Bondage, p. 62.

Table 5.13. Running Costs (in £) of Pioneer Plantation,
1885-1891

Year	Labour ¹	Grain/ Livestock	Plant/ Upkeep Manufacture	Other ²	Irrigation	Total
1885	4431 (57) ³	-	1550	1828	-	7809
1886	6058 (57)	622	2964	967	-	10611
1887	8389 (53)	1274	5050	986	-	15699
1888	9190 (64)	1120	2592	911	626	14439
1889	7696 (53)	1084	3792	947	687	11206
1890	10075 (56)	1480	5410	718	154	17837
1891	8930 (54)	1322	5406	355	487	16500

1. Includes wages and rations for the plantation workers and expenses associated with recruiting and caring for Melanesian, Malay and Chinese labourers.
2. General expenses and miscellaneous costs incurred in operating the plantation.
3. This figure refers to the cost of labour as a percentage of the yearly expenditure.

Source: Assembled and calculated on the basis of figure provided in the Profit and Loss Account for Pioneer Estate in P.M.B., Pioneer Estate's Annual Balance Sheets, 1885-1891.

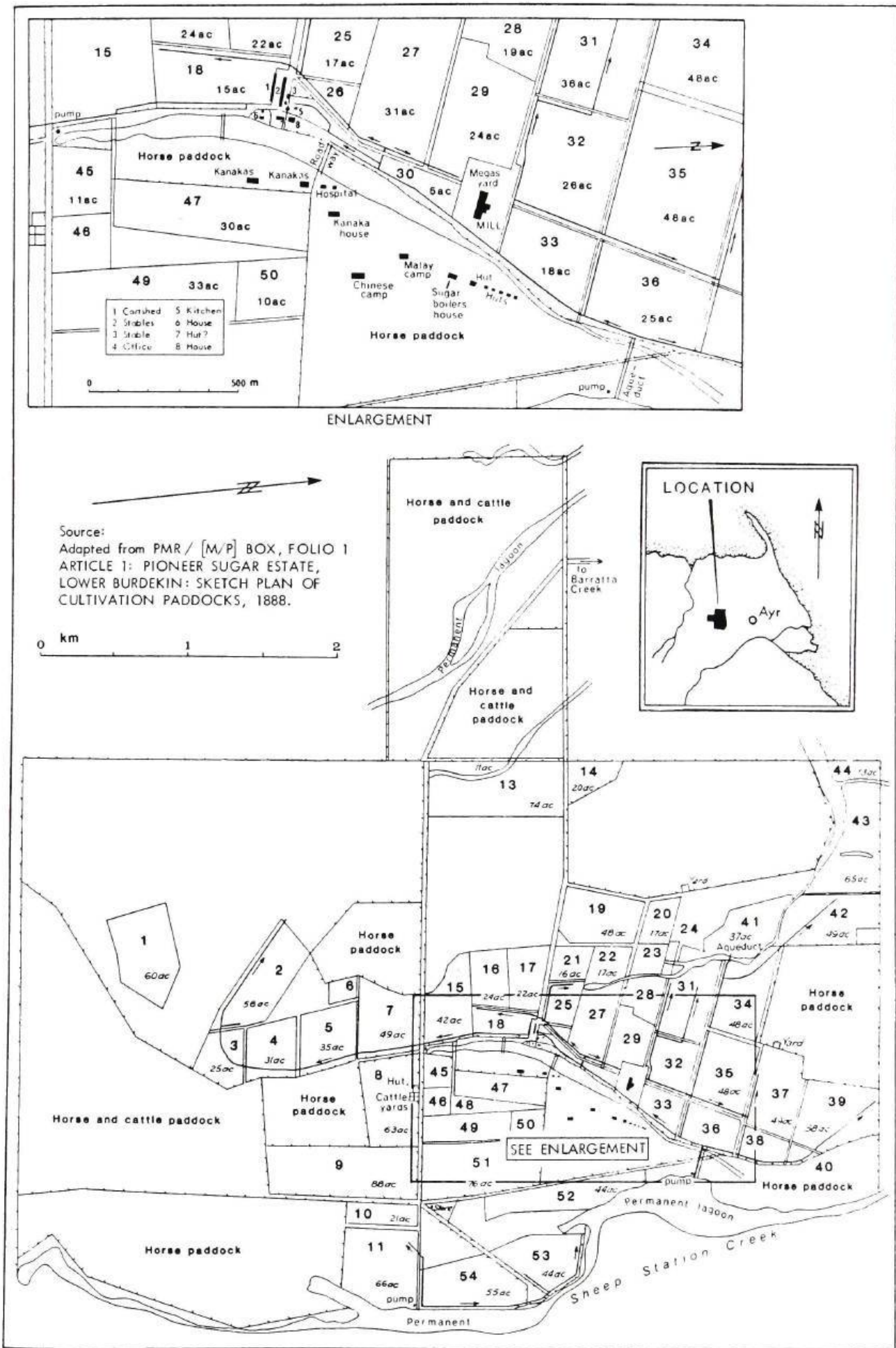


Figure 5.8 A Sketch Plan of Pioneer Estate, 1888.

the managerial staff. Spatial divisions in the location of housing on other plantations were also noted. At Seaforth, the manager's residence and quarters for the European agricultural staff were situated several hundred yards north of the mill, but the Melanesian huts were to the south of the mill, near the meat house, while on Kalamia, the mill staff houses were located in the middle of the plantation, yet the owner's residence overlooked Lilliesmere Lagoon.²⁰⁶

The quality of housing also reflected one's status on the plantation. On the Lower Burdekin, the original owners of Airdmillan, Kalamia and Seaforth plantations all built themselves large, two-storey wooden houses, that were set apart from the mill.²⁰⁷ In contrast, the Melanesian workers lived in huts of reeds and thatchwork²⁰⁸.

Functions of Towns

The concentration of buildings and people on the plantations produced in effect small townships. Indeed, according to Higman, the plantations served many of the functions of the small town and replaced it in the urban hierarchy.²⁰⁹ This was certainly true of the Lower Burdekin plantations. The two towns in the district, Ayr and Brandon, were quite small - the former being recorded as having only seventy inhabitants in Queensland's census in May 1886, while the latter was not even mentioned.²¹⁰ In contrast, the three Lower Burdekin plantations were all recorded as having around 130 Melanesians in residence in December 1886 (see Table 5.10). In addition, there were Europeans and

²⁰⁶ Obtained from an examination of an enlarged original version of Figure 5.7 which revealed the faint writing on the map.

²⁰⁷ Photographs of Airdmillan, Seaforth and Kalamia houses, built by their original owners, are in the author's possession.

²⁰⁸ For a description of the Melanesian huts on Airdmillan, see Brisbane Courier, 28 November 1881.

²⁰⁹ Higman, "Sugar Plantation and Yeoman Farming in New South Wales," p. 705.

²¹⁰ Registrar-General, "Report on the Census of Queensland, 1 May 1886", Q.V.P., 2 (1887): 980.

other labourers which would have swelled the numbers in residence to over 200. As such, the district's plantations in 1886 were substantially greater in population than Ayr. There is no evidence to suggest that this situation would have been reversed by 1891. Indeed, both Ayr and Brandon remained very small towns, until the late 1900s.

As early as September 1884 it was observed that the Lower Burdekin sugar plantations were regarded as central markets for certain types of produce.²¹¹ This strengthened after 1885, for as mentioned previously, by the late 1880s the plantations were the main purchasers of the district's maize crops. In addition, it is reasonable to assume that the smaller selectors could obtain some necessary supplies from the plantation stores instead of visiting Ayr. Certainly, the planters themselves had no need to frequent the small number of stores and blacksmith's shop that had been established in Ayr by 1890.²¹² They had their own blacksmiths and wheelwrights and tended to secure their goods directly from Townsville.

Even though the Lower Burdekin plantations had larger populations than the towns and adopted the role of a central market place, they did not assume all the functions of a town. By 1890 Ayr, with its post office, police magistrate, gaol and courthouse and state school had become the centre in the district where government agencies were located. In addition, there was a hotel, which was probably frequented by the plantation labourers, much to the annoyance of the planters.

5.7 CONCLUSIONS

Throughout the capitalist sugar economies of the world in the late nineteenth century there existed broadly speaking four different systems of production. First, there was the new or neoplantation system based on the large company wage labour instead of slaves and more technically advanced production methods to handle the greater quantities of cane which came from the expanded and amalgamated plantations and sometimes small farmers. It was common in Natal, British Guiana,

²¹¹ Sydney Morning Herald, 15 September 1884.

²¹² For a list of the business premises in Ayr in 1890, see Pugh's Almanac (Country Directory), 1891, p. 51.

Trinidad, Fiji, Louisiana and parts of Queensland.²¹³ The second alternative was the central factory system where the plantation owners grew the cane, but instead of processing it themselves they would send the crops to large, central factories. This arrangement was to be found in Brazil and parts of Natal and the West Indies by the end of the nineteenth century.²¹⁴ The third alternative was an arrangement known as metayage or share cropping. It was a compromise whereby labourers shared proceeds with the planters in lieu of wages. Under this system the labourers cut the cane, did all the cultivation and provided all the manual work associated with the milling of the crops. The estate proprietor provided the land and all the equipment, stock and milling facilities. The sugar made was usually divided in halves, with the planter generally purchasing the metayagers' share of the sugar. This arrangement was used in parts of Tobago, St. Lucia, Grenada and Fiji in the 1890s.²¹⁵ Lastly, the fourth alternative was the central mill system in which the factory was supplied by small farmers. It was most developed in Queensland in the 1890s.

Given the above categories of production, it is reasonable to argue that an incipient form of neplantation system was established on the Lower Burdekin in the early 1880s. However, although elements of the neplantation system were present, there were certain similarities between it and the plantations of earlier centuries. Both systems were vertically integrated, relied on cheap labour (either indentured or slaves)

²¹³ For a record of such a system operating in Queensland see Kerr, Pioneer Pageant, p. 158; Manning, In their own hands, pp. 134-135, 144, 151; and Nolan, Bundaberg, p. 111. Details on the system's existence in the other areas referred to above can be found in Richardson, "The Natal Sugar Industry in the Nineteenth Century", p. 255; Adamson, Sugar Without Slaves, pp. 190-192, 202, 212-213; H. Johnston, "The Origins and Early Development of Cane Farming in Trinidad, 1882-1906", Journal of Caribbean History, 5 (1972): 48; Moynagh, Brown or White, pp. 41, 46; and J.C. Sitterson, Sugar Country (Lexington: Uni. of Kentucky Press, 1953), pp. 260-261.

²¹⁴ R.W. Beachey, The British West Indies Sugar Industry in the Late Nineteenth Century (Oxford: Blackwell, 1957), pp. 84-86; J. Galloway, "The sugar industry of Pernambuco during the Nineteenth Century", Annals of the Association of American Geographers, 58 (1968): 300; Richardson, "The Natal Sugar Industry in the Nineteenth Century", p. 255.

²¹⁵ Beachey, The British West Indies Sugar Industry in the Late Nineteenth Century, pp. 115-116; Moynagh, Brown or White, p. 78.

and remained "total institutions" orientated towards world cores.²¹⁶ Other features of the Lower Burdekin plantations were as follows: large areal size (over 1,000 acres), location on freehold property on the northern side of the Burdekin River, close to Barratta or Plantation Creeks which, unlike the Burdekin, were navigable to small coastal steamers; and linkages with urban centres, particularly London, Melbourne or Brisbane, through ownership, financial backing and sale of raw sugar.

Establishing a sugar industry on the Lower Burdekin in the 1880s based on plantations was not without its problems. It soon became apparent that erratic yearly rainfall made the region not ideally suited to sugar growing. The Lower Burdekin planters were required to install extensive facilities consisting of pumps, flumes, drains and spears to irrigate the large acreages under cane. More importantly, the context within which the Lower Burdekin sugar industry operated changed due to the substantial drop in the world price of sugar in 1884 and the introduction of legislation in 1885 prohibiting the recruitment of Melanesians to Queensland after December 1890. Consequently, there were shortages of Melanesians, but more significantly the reduced returns from the sale of sugar resulted in all the Lower Burdekin planters, with the exception of Drysdale Bros., suffering financial ruin by 1890. The plantations were taken over by their creditors.

Given the difficulties faced by the planters, was it possible that a different form of sugar production might have emerged on the Lower Burdekin in the 1880s? Certainly there was the potential for a system of small farmers supplying a central mill to develop, for the district's small selectors expressed an interest in such a scheme in early 1884.²¹⁷ The idea was again raised in 1885 by Dr. Ahearne, who wrote to the Premier of Queensland claiming that "a number of small selectors were prepared to grow cane for a central mill if erected on the Lower Burdekin".²¹⁸ However, when W.O. Hodgkinson, inquiring about locations for central mills in Queensland, visited Ayr in March 1886 he found little interest in

²¹⁶ For a discussion on the differences and similarities between traditional and neoplantation systems see Courtenay, Plantation Agriculture, pp. 54-55.

²¹⁷ P.D.T., 23 February 1884.

²¹⁸ Dr. J. Ahearne, Townsville, to the Premier of Queensland, Brisbane, 14 September 1885. Reproduced in Q.V.P., 1 (1885): 1161.

the idea of a central mill for the district.²¹⁹ Such a turn about by the region's small farmers was no doubt related to the depression in the sugar industry and the government's requirement that the cane for the central mills be grown by European labour only. As such, the central mills were built at Mackay and the Lower Burdekin small farmers turned to growing maize instead of sugar-cane, despite the abundance of land throughout the region that was suited to the crop.

The final point that needs to be made in this discussion is that soon after the establishment of the Lower Burdekin sugar industry it quickly became apparent that the Queensland Government was going to significantly influence its future evolution. However, an equally important force to emerge in this formative period in the history of the Lower Burdekin sugar industry was John Drysdale. His importance in shaping the development of the Lower Burdekin sugar industry will be seen more clearly in the next chapter, as his entrepreneurial skills engineered a temporary reprieve for the flagging fortunes of the district's plantations. Despite his efforts, however, the plantations were replaced eventually by proprietary central mills supplied by small family farms. The processes which caused this transformation had commenced already in this formative phase and not even John Drysdale could stop the inevitable outcome.

²¹⁹ W.O. Hodgkinson, "Report on Central Mills", Q.V.P., 2 (1886): 16.

CHAPTER 6THE EMERGENCE OF YEOMAN FARMERS: 1892-19016.1 INTRODUCTION

In the last chapter it was shown that the Lower Burdekin sugar industry in 1891 was based on an incipient form of neoplantation mode of production. These incipient neoplantations became fully developed in the early 1890s, as the cane supplies to the mills - upgraded by the installation of the latest technically advanced production methods - were expanded due to the increase in the area under cultivation on the estates. Also contributing to the greater cane supplies to the plantation mills were the district's small farmers, who increasingly adopted cane cultivation in the 1890s. These small farmers unsuccessfully attempted to erect their own mill. In response, the planters-cum-millers were forced to introduce contracts binding the small farmers to a particular mill. Consequently, the foundation of the industry's tight regulatory structure was laid in this period.

The above developments will form the focus of this discussion, but before they are considered it is essential to review the broader economic and political developments which influenced the Queensland sugar industry in the last decade of the nineteenth century.

6.2 SUPPORTING THE SMALL FARMERS

In February 1892 Sir S.W. Griffith issued a startling manifesto proposing the resumption of the recruitment of Melanesians for the Queensland sugar industry, but under stronger safeguards than previously. Shortly afterwards, Griffith's Government was able to pass legislation which removed the restriction upon the importation of labour from the Pacific Islands and introduced provisions to prevent Melanesians from competing unduly with European labour in industries other than sugar. Griffith explained this turn about in economic terms - the depressed state of the industry - but also blamed two villains: first, a few old-fashioned planters who refused to co-operate (there were probably more than a few); and second, the leaders of the labour movement who had made it difficult for small farmers to employ 'whites' by demanding excessive wages and by stirring up anti-Italian feelings.¹

¹ Bolton, A Thousand Miles Away, p. 204; Coghlan, Labour and Industry in Australia, p. 1306.

The decision to permit the resumption of the recruitment of Melanesian workers was followed a year later by the introduction of the Sugar Works Guarantee Act of 1893, which allocated £500,000 for the erection of new central mills. Farmers could group together, mortgage their lands as security and obtain the necessary finance to build their own mills. This arrangement was particularly attractive to small growers who were still struggling to be free of the constraints of the planters' mills.

Under the Sugar Works Guarantee Act of 1893, nine new mills were erected in the colony during the 1890s and two privately owned but closed mills (i.e. Marion and Pleystowe, Mackay) were taken over by farmers and reopened (see Figure 6.1). Of the new central mills erected in the 1890s, Mt. Bauple, Moreton and Nerang were built in the south of the colony where cane growing was languishing after the depression in the late 1880s. The successful erection of so many central mills in Queensland in the 1890s occurred because of a combination of two reasons: first, the Crown's offer of finance was not tied to a proviso that the mills only accept cane grown by 'white' labour; and second, many of the small farmers now owned their land which could be offered as security. This was not the case in the mid-1880s when Griffith's Government first tried to encourage the erection of central mills.

All of the central mills erected in Queensland under the 1893 legislation crushed for the first time between 1895 and 1897. According to Saunders, the government funded central mills were far more efficient than the privately owned mills of the 1870s and 1880s.² Indeed, many of the smaller and inefficient plantation mills disappeared during the late 1880s and early 1890s.³ However, Saunders' claim is not entirely correct, for by 1904 the Queensland Government was forced to establish a Bureau of Central Sugar Mills to manage the affairs of several of the central mills which had run into financial difficulties.⁴ An assesment of why Queensland's government funded central mills were so initially financially unsuccessful and an overall scholarly account of their history awaits

² Saunders, Workers in Bondage, p. 51.

³ Kerr, Pioneer Pageant, pp. 100-102; Kerr, Southern Sugar Saga, pp. 31-33; Shlomowitz, "Melanesian Labor and the Development of the Queensland Sugar Industry, 1863-1906", p. 340.

⁴ Wood, Sugar Country, p. 22.

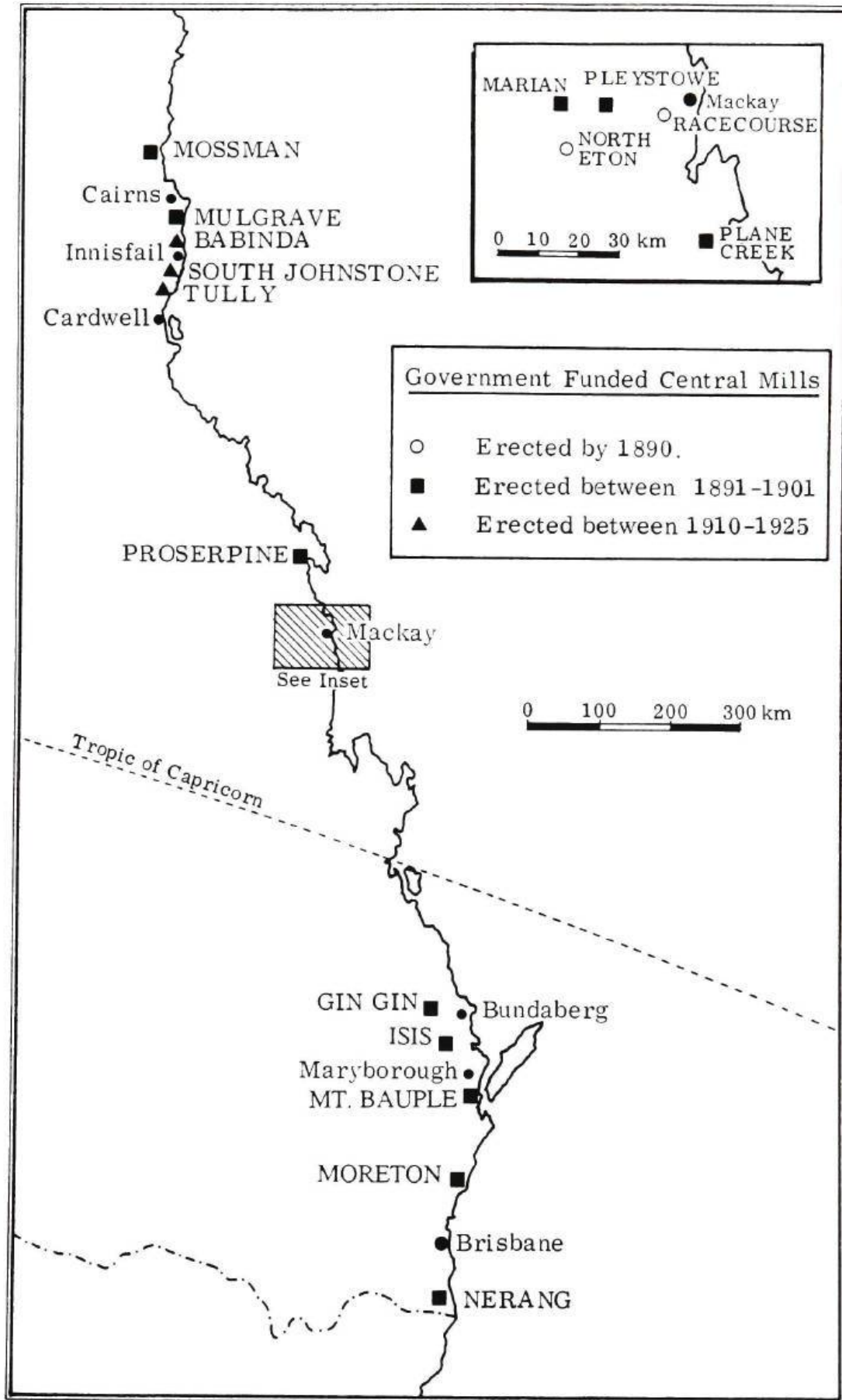


Figure 6.1 The Location of Queensland's Government Funded Central Mills.

compilation.⁵

The combination of the assurance that Melanesian labour could again be recruited and the erection of new central mills restored the confidence of the colony's sugar growers. Consequently, the Queensland sugar industry began to expand, particularly in the north of the colony and the Childers/Maryborough region. Indeed, by 1901 the amount of sugar-cane grown in Queensland was more than double the area under the crop in 1892 (see Table 6.1). Furthermore, despite the low raw sugar prices in the 1890s,⁶ sugar-cane had once again become a profitable crop by the end of the decade, as production became more efficient through improved cultivation techniques and advances in mill technology. This recovery in the colony's sugar industry was quite significant considering the Queensland economy was troubled by a depression and a series of droughts in the 1890s.

The rapid growth in the area under cane in Queensland in the 1890s was associated with a change in the industry's production unit from the plantation to central mills supplied by small family farms. This transformation is attested to by the increase in the number of small sugar-cane farmers from 201 in 1888 to 1,387 in 1894 to over 2,500 by 1899.⁷ Plantations continued to exist in Queensland, however, despite Fitzgerald's claim otherwise.⁸

It is reasonable to conclude that some of the expansion in the number of small cane farmers in Queensland in the 1890s was related to the planters subdividing their estates and selling or leasing the land to

⁵ For brief overviews on the history of Queensland's central sugar mills prior to 1900, see Shirley Adamson, "Establishment of central sugar mills", *J. of R.H.S.Q.*, 4, 5 (1952): 728-732; Neville Lund, "The origin and development of co-operative mills in Queensland", *J. of R.H.S.Q.*, 5, 3 (1955): 1103-9; and Reeves, *State Experiments in Australia and New Zealand*, pp. 351-355.

⁶ Lowndes, *South Pacific Enterprise*, p. 443.

⁷ *Q.V.P.*, 4 (1889): 434-438; *Q.V.P.*, 3 (1895): 1017; *C.P.P.*, 2 (1901-2): 977.

⁸ Fitzgerald, *From the Dreaming to 1915*, p. 187. For evidence of the existence of sugar plantations in the 1890s see Bolton, *A Thousand Miles Away*, p. 236, and Kerr, *Southern Sugar Saga*, p. 45.

Table 6.1. Distribution of Sugar-Cane Acreage in Queensland
1892-1901

Region	1892	1893	1894	1895	1896	1897	1898	1899	1900	1901
Cairns/ Mossman	1235	1426	1707	2896	4332	6749	8101	10054	11290	13618
Herbert/ Mourilyan	9365	9090	9913	10516	12263	12826	15893	16703	17923	19495
Lower Burdekin	3711	4122	5082	6084	6089	6510	7818	7577	5894	6242
Proserpine	0	0	43	414	692	1102	1632	1983	2031	2275
Mackay	15813	16552	20290	20544	21076	27251	29891	27317	26094	24284
Rock- hampton	530	827	823	885	773	1192	933	940	908	851
Bundaberg	18891	19499	21751	20158	20458	23305	25550	24911	24272	24958
Childers/ Maryborough	3965	5862	9543	3783	13619	15253	16651	17166	16756	16832
Maroochy	131	143	195	192	178	913	1182	1141	924	1128
Brisbane/ Logan	1879	1750	2471	3000	3613	3540	3361	2865	2443	2348
TOTAL	55520	59271	71818	68472	83093	98641	111012	110657	108535	112031

Source: Assembled on the basis of the figures in the Annual Reports of the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Stock in Q.V.P., 1893-1902.

small farmers.⁹ Assessing this contribution, however, is not possible at this time due to a lack of detailed studies on all of the colony's sugar growing regions and an absence of such governmental statistics. It is most likely, however, that a fair proportion of the increase in the number of small cane farmers in Queensland in the 1890s was a result of established farmers turning to growing sugar-cane or new Crown land openings swelling the number of settlers in a region and these settlers turning to sugar cultivation. Certainly, as will be seen later in this discussion, the majority of the new sugar-cane farmers on the Lower Burdekin in the 1890s were located on small blocks opened to settlement in the 1880s and not on areas obtained from plantation subdivision. To what extent the Lower Burdekin was atypical, however, could not be determined.

Finally, the 1890s was a decade when the Queensland Government organized further scientific aid to assist the sugar industry. In the late 1880s the Crown had established two State nurseries where tests were carried out on sugar-cane growing. However, by 1894 the industry was dissatisfied with the nurseries because of the lack of scientific investigation into soils and different sugar-cane varieties. Agitation commenced for sugar experiment stations and laboratories along the lines of certain overseas sugar-cane producing countries.¹⁰

Official notice of the industry's requirements initially resulted in the erection of a laboratory at the State's agricultural nursery in Mackay. This development, however, was only a temporary measure, for in 1899 it was announced that the nursery would be closed and the site used as the location for a Sugar Experiment Station. At the same time, Dr. Walter Maxwell of the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association was asked to visit Queensland and prepare a report on the sugar industry.¹¹

Maxwell's investigations found that the soils in the cane growing regions were in many cases exhausted, yields were low and the farmers used "crude and superficial" methods to handle the land. Advice and

⁹ For a discussion on the subdivision of sugar plantations in the 1890s see Kerr, Southern Sugar Saga, p. 68; Jones, Trinity Phoenix, pp. 370-71; Jones, Hurricane Lamps and Blue Umbrellas, p. 255; Munro, The Sugar Fields of Mackay, pp. 13, 14, 29, 35, 63, 64.

¹⁰ Norman J. King, "The Foundation and Development of the B.S.E.S.", in Fifty Years of Scientific Progress, ed. A.F. Bell (Brisbane: Government Printer, 1950), p. 5.

¹¹ King, "The Foundation and Development of the B.S.E.S.", p. 5.

instruction was also required in the supervision and control of the mills.¹² After reviewing Maxwell's report, the Queensland Government offered him the position of the Director of the Bureau of Sugar Experiment Stations. This offer was accepted and in December 1900 the Sugar Experiment Act of 1900 was passed. It provided, *inter alia*, for the establishment of a Bureau of Sugar Experiment Stations, the appointment of a Director and the creation of a sugar fund. The legislation was amended a year later to require all mill owners to install a correct and reliable weighbridge for the purpose of determining the weight of the sugar-cane supplied to their factory and to keep books in which they recorded the names of their growers and the weight of the sugar-cane they supplied.¹³

The decision to establish a Bureau of Sugar Experiment Stations in 1900 ended a decade in which the Queensland Government considerably assisted the colony's small sugar-cane farmers. This support was accompanied by continued government encouragement of closer settlement through further pastoral resumptions and land openings. The extent of these resumptions and land openings on the Lower Burdekin in the 1890s will now be considered. This information together with the above details will then form the political and economic background to the discussion on the evolution of the Lower Burdekin sugar industry in the 1890s.

6.3 FURTHER ATTEMPTS AT CLOSER SETTLEMENT

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Crown in the 1880s opened to selection the lands comprising the Woodhouse Resumption. Demand for this country was limited because of its poor quality and location, so that 11,879 acres of the original 14,000 acres opened to purchase were withdrawn from selection in 1894. Sales of Crown land on the Lower Burdekin then ceased and did not resume until late 1897. This cessation occurred probably because of the northern pastoral recession which was brought about by outbreaks of redwater fever and the increased incidence of ticks decimating the cattle herds, including those on the Lower Burdekin.¹⁴

¹² Walter Maxwell, Report upon an investigation into the condition of the sugar industry in Queensland (Brisbane: Government Printer, 1900), p. 17.

¹³ King, "The Foundation and Development of the B.S.E.S.", p. 6; Q.P.P., 4 (1901): 297.

¹⁴ See Bolton, A Thousand Miles Away, pp. 218-220.

When land sales resumed on the Lower Burdekin in 1897, the blocks offered for selection were made available under the Crown Lands Act of 1897. This land legislation, which replaced the Crown Lands Act of 1884, aimed to consolidate and amend the laws relating to the occupation, leasing and alienation of Crown lands. It contained provisions for resumptions from the remaining pastoral runs for the purpose of closer settlement. Once again resumed country could be secured as agricultural farms, grazing farms, unconditional selections and agricultural homesteads, the new name for homestead selections or small agricultural farms.

Under the new legislation the tenure of agricultural farms was materially altered. There was a twenty year period substituted for a fifty year period and the annual payments of rent became, as a matter of course, instalments on the final purchase price of the freehold title of the land. Despite the change in tenure for agricultural farms, the maximum area that could be selected under this class remained 1,280 acres.

Agricultural homesteads of 160, 320 or 640 acres in size could now be obtained under a ten year lease at the price specified in the proclamation. Selectors of an agricultural homestead or for that matter an agricultural farm had to show that the land had been occupied, either personally or by a bailiff, and within five years they had to enclose the selection with a fence or make substantial improvements to the value of an enclosing fence.

Occupation licenses remained part of the new legislation. As before, the license was granted for only a year and any land comprising the license was able to be proclaimed open for selection with the lessee receiving compensation for improvements.¹⁵

Following the introduction of the above legislation, pastoral resumptions commenced again on the Lower Burdekin after a lull of a decade. Between November 1897 and December 1899 parts of Woodstock No. 2, Clarendon, Cooina, Callandoon No. 2 and Woodhouse Lease occupation licenses were appropriated by the government and opened to selection as grazing farms¹⁶ (see Figure 6.2). Even though much of this

¹⁵ Details of the Crown Lands Act of 1897 are taken from Bernays, Queensland Politics during Sixty Years, pp. 330-331.

¹⁶ Q.G.G., 68 (1897): 994; Q.G.G., 69 (1898): 882-883; Q.G.G., 71 (1899): 912.

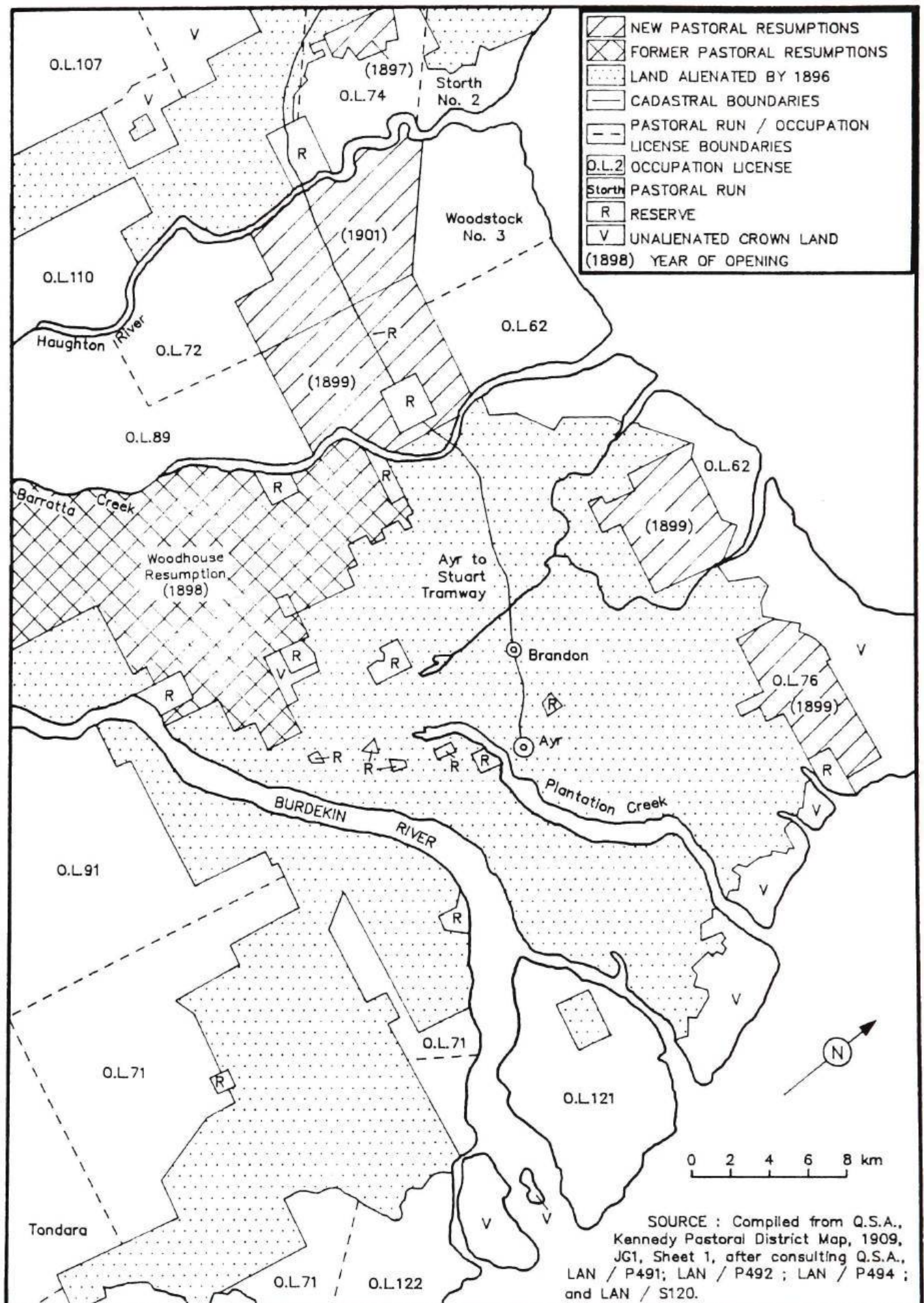


Figure 6.2 Categories of Crown Land Opened to Selection on the Lower Burdekin, 1897 – 1901

country was selected (see Figure 6.3), most inquiries to the Townsville Land Commissioner were concerned with when the lands held as occupation licenses in the vicinity of the Haughton River would be made available for closer settlement.¹⁷

The Crown had already inspected the Haughton River lands in 1894 with the view of opening them to selection, but had not proceeded with the proposal.¹⁸ This renewed interest in the country around the Haughton River occurred undoubtedly as a consequence of the building of the Ayr to Stuart Tramway (see Appendix 2 for a full discussion). Indeed, a report on the proposal to build a tramway between Ayr and Stuart had observed there were several places along the anticipated route - notably at the Haughton River - that contained considerable areas of cultivable land.¹⁹ Nevertheless, when the tramway was finally completed in early 1901, the occupation licenses in the vicinity of the Haughton River remained intact. Indeed, it was September 1901 before the government made 7,700 acres of Callandoon No. 2 available for selection as grazing farms. This was followed in December 1901 by a further 2,000 acres of Callandoon No. 2 being offered for purchase as either agricultural farms, agricultural homesteads or unconditional selections.²⁰ Both subdivisions were located in the northern section of Callandoon No. 2, closest to the Ayr to Stuart Tramway (see Figure 6.2). All of this land, except for two small blocks, was chosen in 1901 (see Figure 6.3). The unselected blocks were purchased later in the mid-1900s. Interest in the lands in the vicinity of the Haughton River also resulted in the subdivision of a reserve on the western bank of the Haughton River in 1902. All of this reserve was mainly taken up as agricultural farms by 1903.²¹

¹⁷ Extract from the Annual Report of Mr. G.W. Young, Land Commissioner, Townsville, Q.V.P., 2 (1900): 972. For newspaper reports on interest in the Haughton River lands see N.Q.H., 1 January 1900, p. 29; N.Q.H., 8 February 1901, p. 4 and N.Q.H., 26 October 1901, p. 27.

¹⁸ Land Commissioner, Townsville, to the Sec., Department of Public Lands, Brisbane, 5 March 1894, Q.S.A., LAN/AK12, Batch 22, In-letter 04572 of 1894.

¹⁹ George Phillips, "Report on the proposal to build the Ayr Tramway, 3 October 1899, Q.S.A., A/9122, Bundle headed 'Ayr Tramway: General Conditions etc.', Document 4/3249. 3pp.

²⁰ Q.G.G., 77 (1901): 226-227.

²¹ N.Q.H., 3 May 1902, p. 37; Q.G.G., 79 (1902): 315; Q.S.A., LAN/P492.

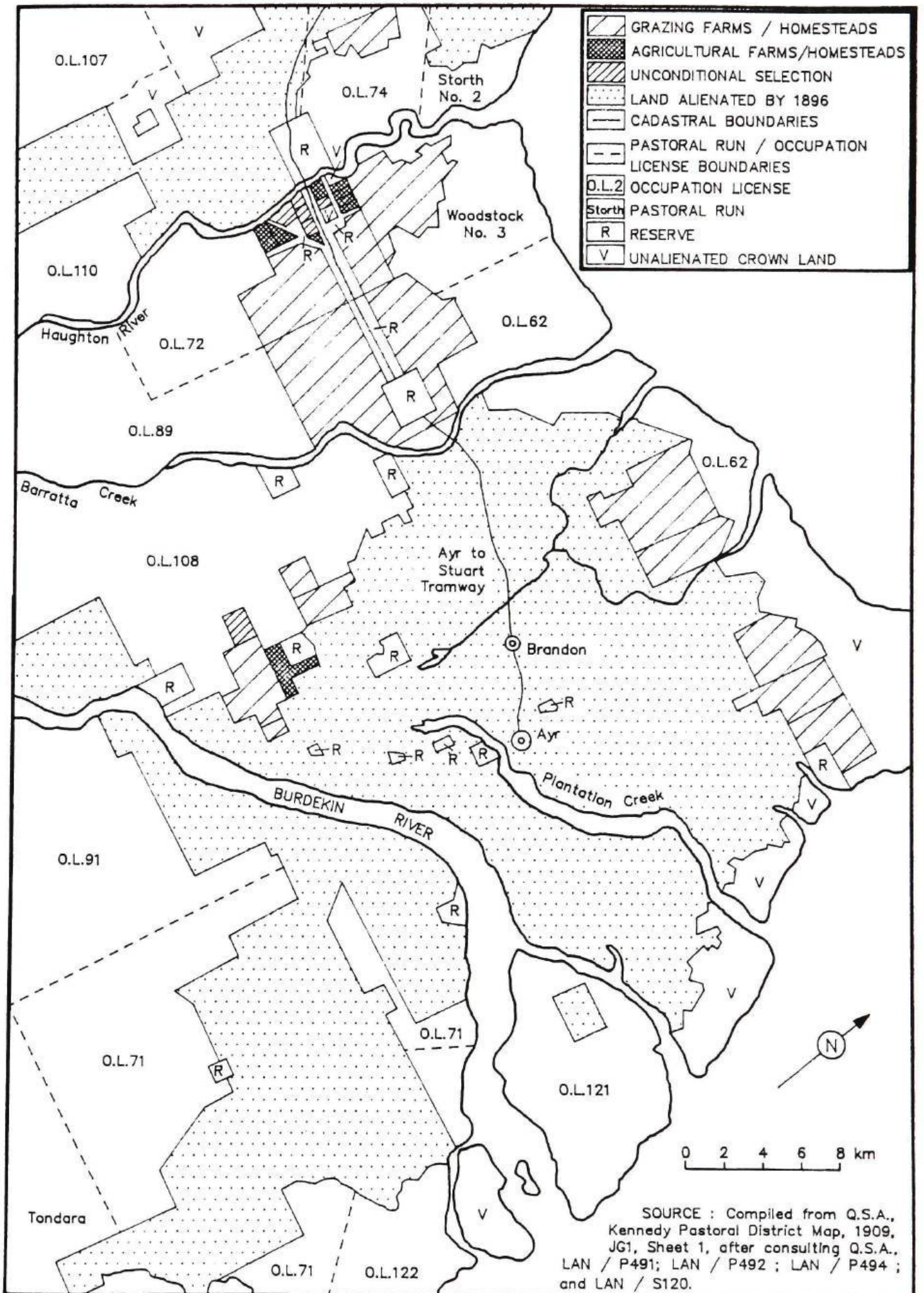


Figure 6.3 Types of Crown Land Selections on the Lower Burdekin, 1897 – 1901

Besides generating blocks for closer settlement from new pastoral resumptions on the Lower Burdekin in the 1890s, the Crown again tried to sell blocks on the Woodhouse Resumption.²² A few small grazing farms were selected, but in 1900 the government, although not withdrawing the land from selection, offered the area for occupation as a grazing lease. It was subsequently taken up as an occupation license (O.L. 108 - Woodhouse Resumption).²³ Other occupation licenses obtained around the turn of the century on the Lower Burdekin were as follows: Mount Elliott South No. 2 (O.L. 107) secured in 1900; Rita Island (O.L. 121) and Heath (O.L. 122) occupied in 1901; and Pacific Block (O.L. 139) selected in 1902.²⁴ Most of the country incorporated into the occupation licenses at this time had previously been vacant Crown land.

In summary, it is reasonable to conclude that the Crown had moderate success in its closer settlement objectives on the Lower Burdekin in the 1890s. Vacant Crown land was taken up as occupation licenses and pastoral resumptions, particularly around the Haughton River, were successfully disposed of as either the smaller agricultural farms or the larger grazing farms. Nevertheless, in 1901 parts of the region still had not been subjected to subdivision and closer settlement. These areas included Rita Island, the occupation licenses on the southern side of the Burdekin River (O.L. 71 and O.L. 91) and the country incorporating O.L. 108 (see Figure 6.3). Furthermore, several large freehold estates (e.g. Airdmillan, Norham, Macdesme) and the N.A.P.C.'s extensive list of freehold properties south of the Burdekin River and on the eastern bank of the Haughton River remained intact. Accordingly, there was still room for additional Crown land openings and of course subdivision of large, freehold estates.

Lastly, it is important to note that the Crown's moderate success in its land sales on the Lower Burdekin in the late 1890s had no bearing on the development of the sugar industry in the region during the decade. It was not until the mid-1900s that farmers on the blocks selected around the Haughton River at the turn of the century began growing sugar-cane. The growth in the sugar industry on the Lower Burdekin in the 1890s was, as will be shown below, mainly a result of expansion on the plantations and the farmers settled on the land in the 1880s beginning sugar-cane cultivation.

²² Q.G.G., 69 (1898): 822, 885, 1223; Q.G.G., 70 (1898): 1175, 1177.

²³ Q.G.G., 74 (1900): 312; Q.S.A., LAN/S120, p. 9.

²⁴ Q.S.A., LAN S/120, pp. 8, 22, 23, 39.

6.4 PLANTATION EXPANSION

Griffith's decision to allow the resumption of Melanesian recruitment to Queensland quickly restored the Lower Burdekin planters' confidence in sugar-growing. In early 1892 it was reported that the new owners of Kalamia and Seaforth plantations, Young, Ehlers & Co. - a London based firm which acted as agents for the disposal of the Union Mortgage and Agency Company's (U.M.A. Co.)²⁵ wool - were preparing to extend the area cultivated on both estates.²⁶ Indeed, in 1893 Young, Ehlers & Co. leased from the A.N.Z.M. Co. (the former mortgagor of the plantations) a 350 acre block near Lilliesmere Lagoon on Airdmillan Estate and 500 acres on Ivanhoe Estate (see Figure 6.4). These leases, according to Charles Young writing several years later, ensured that Seaforth and Kalamia plantations were not abandoned, as was contemplated in early 1892.²⁷

In addition to leasing land to extend cultivation, Young, Ehlers & Co. expanded Seaforth's irrigation system and improved the machinery at Kalamia Mill through the installation of a second set of rollers (purchased from Branscombe Mill, Mackay), up-to-date macerating equipment and Henry Braby's mechanical carriers that allowed automatic feeding of megass to the mill's furnaces.²⁸ However, Young, Ehlers & Co. were not alone on the Lower Burdekin in their efforts in 1892 to improve their operations. Drysdale Bros. had also upgraded Pioneer Mill through the installation of Henry Braby's contrivance for drying, screening, and sifting sugar to reduce lumps and a second set of rollers obtained from the idle plant at Airdmillan Mill.²⁹

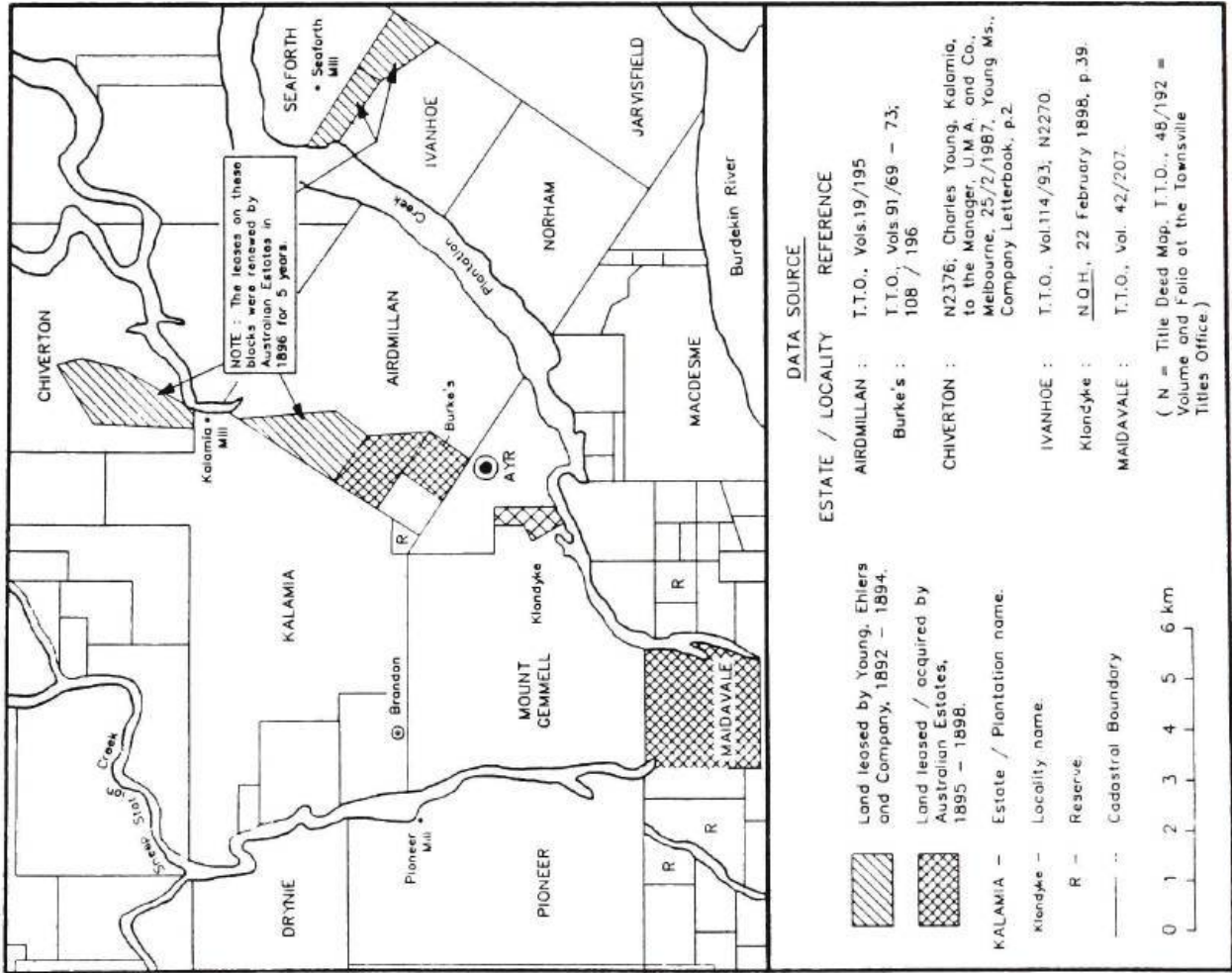
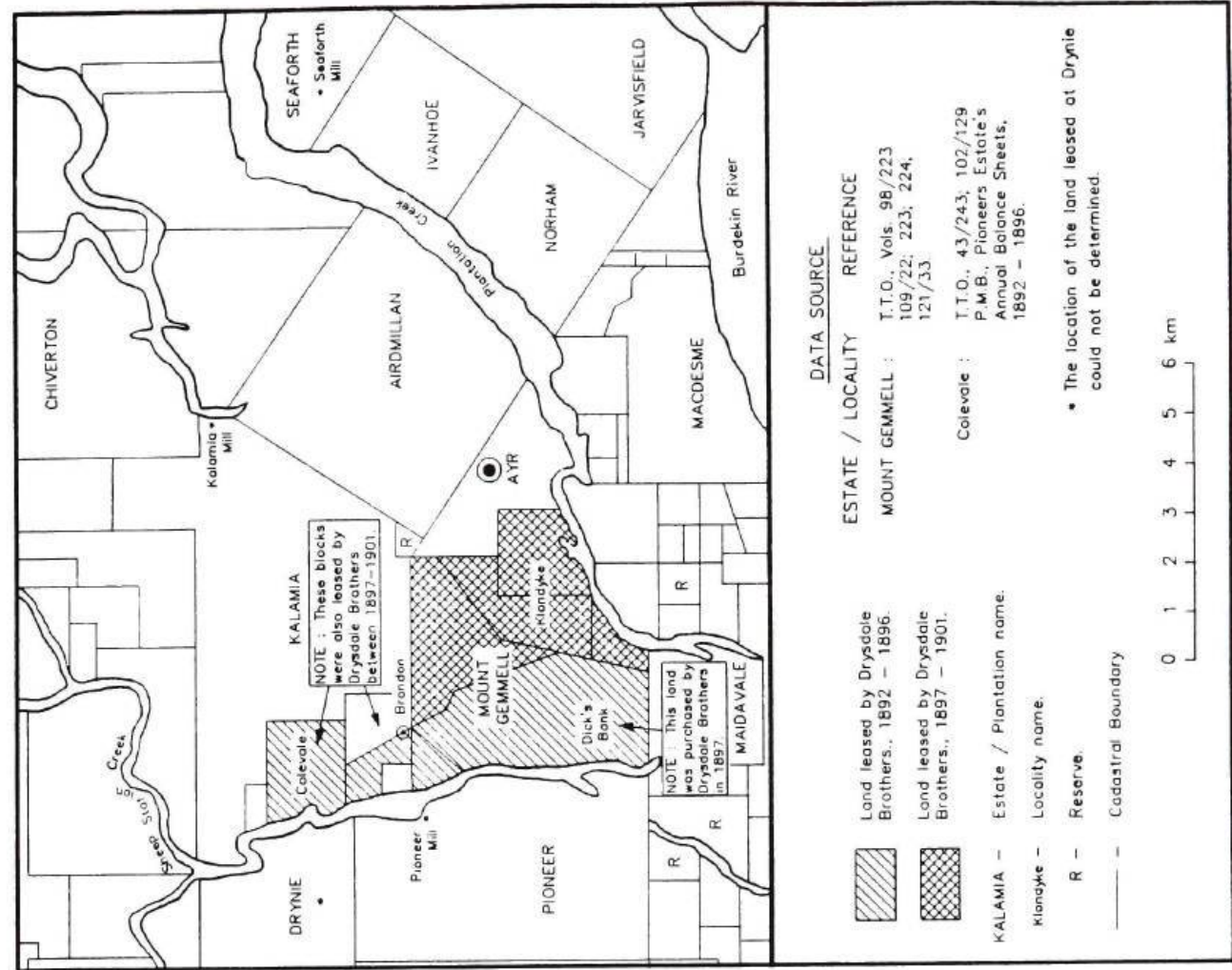
²⁵ It is difficult to determine when Young, Ehlers & Co. took control of the plantations. In 1890 there is mention of Young, Ehlers & Co. seeking permission from the U.M.A. Co. to import Melanesians for Kalamia and Seaforth plantations. (A.N.U., Archives of Business and Labour, U.M.A. Co., 165/103, Board Minute Book No. 2, p. 31). However, it was not until 1893 and 1894 that the title deeds of Kalamia and Seaforth were transferred to J.S. Hill, the principal partner in Young, Ehlers & Co. and member of the Board of Directors of the A.N.Z.M. Co. (see T.T.O., Vols. 23/225, 239; 28/236; 99/167; 101/1).

²⁶ N.Q.H., 16 March 1892, p. 16.

²⁷ Charles Young, Kalamia, to Henry Young, Cambridge Downs Station, 18 January 1895, Young Ms., Private Letterbook, p. 89.

²⁸ S.J.T.C., 1, 3 (1892): 146; S.J.T.C., 1, 5 (1892): 96; S.J.T.C., 1, 8 (1892): 167; N.Q.H., 6 April 1892, p. 21.

²⁹ S.J.T.C., 1, 2 (1892): 96; N.Q.H., 10 August 1892, p. 25.



Expansion of the plantations and further upgrading of the Lower Burdekin mills continued throughout 1893 and 1894. Drysdale Bros. secured leases over blocks at Colevale and Dick's Bank³⁰ (see Figure 6.5), although it only cultivated the land at the latter, for the former block was sub-let to farmers. Reference also exists to Drysdale Bros. leasing land on Drynie Estate in 1893 and 1894³¹, although this lease is not recorded on the Drynie file at the Townsville Titles Office. Accordingly, the specific location of this leased land or if it was used for cane growing could not be determined. Pioneer Mill was also improved by the installation of a new boiler and vacuum pan,³² the latter piece of plant having to be obtained from England and not Airdmillan Mill as was envisaged by Drysdale Bros.³³ A chemist was even employed at Pioneer, after he had spent time observing the production of sugar at the C.S.R. Co.'s Victoria Mill at Ingham.³⁴ Across at Kalamia, new clarifiers, a boiler, an electric light and Braby's megass drying contrivance were installed in the mill and a lease over 230 acres of land suitable for sugar cultivation on Chiverton was taken out to further expand the estate's ability to grow more cane (see Figure 6.4). Seaforth Mill's effectiveness was also improved by the installation of a second crushing plant, a new boiler and Braby's megass drying apparatus.³⁵

The decisions in 1893 and 1894 to improve Kalamia and Seaforth mills and expand the areas cultivated were taken no doubt to ensure that the estates could make a profit, for John S. Hill threatened in early 1893 to end operations on the Lower Burdekin plantations if their financial

³⁰ The land leased by Drysdale Bros. at Dick's Bank was formerly part of Mount Gemmell Estate, which was subdivided by G.G. Dick into six blocks in 1891. Dick initially retained three of the subdivisions, selling the three blocks comprising the Dick's Bank locality to the Townsville merchant, William V. Brown.

³¹ P.M.B., Pioneer Estate's Annual Balance Sheet 1893, p. 13; P.M.B., Pioneer Estate's Annual Balance Sheet, 1894, p. 14.

³² S.J.T.C., 3, 4 (1894): 79.

³³ George Drysdale had hoped to acquire Airdmillan's vacuum pan at a cheap price, but it was sold to Messrs Buss Bros., Bundaberg. Other Airdmillan machinery was purchased by E.M. Long, Mackay (S.J.T.C., 2, 1 (1893): 7; S.J.T.C., 3, 4 (1894): 79).

³⁴ The Manager, Victoria Mill, Ingham, to E.M. Knox, Sydney, 9 May 1895, A.N.U., Archives of Business and Labour, C.S.R. Records, Victoria Out-letterbook No. 8, 142/1553, p. 423.

³⁵ N.Q.H., 9 May 1894, p. 5; S.J.T.C., 3, 4 (1894): 79.

returns did not improve.³⁶ Although the estates made a loss of £13,000 in 1893, at least Kalamia was able to show a profit of £9,000 in 1894.³⁷ Despite this improvement, it appears Young, Ehlers & Co. was unwilling to continue operating sugar estates in Queensland. Seaforth and Kalamia plantations were sold in 1895 to the Australian Estates and Mortgage Co. Ltd. (hereafter abbreviated to Australian Estates).³⁸

At this stage it is necessary to diverge and briefly explain the history and organizational structure of Australian Estates, for the company was to control Kalamia and Seaforth Mills throughout the remainder of this study. Australian Estates was formed in 1894 as a subsidiary of the U.M.A. Co.; a wool selling and agency business established in 1884 by William Sloane and R.J. Jeffray.³⁹ It was expected that Australian Estates would eventually take over all the U.M.A. Co.'s assets and liabilities (properties and mortgages), while the parent company retained the agency business. However, in 1899 the U.M.A. Co. was amalgamated with Australian Estates. When the U.M.A. Co. was in operation between 1894 and 1899, its Melbourne Office acted as the Australian agents for Australian Estates. After 1899 the Melbourne Office of the U.M.A. Co. became the Melbourne Board of Australian Estates. This arrangement - a London Board and a Melbourne Board - existed until the 1950s. Indeed, it was this structure of the Company that led to problems in managing the sugar estates. The managers of the Lower Burdekin and Mackay sugar holdings of Australian Estates reported to the Melbourne Board, who then sent extracts from their reports to the London Board. After considering the communications from Melbourne, the London Board would respond with its instructions, which would then be relayed via the Melbourne Office to the Managers on the sugar estates. Such a lengthy communication procedure inevitably led to delays in decision making, especially when it was likely that the London Board was unsure of what was really happening on their sugar properties.

³⁶ Charles Young, Kalamia, to R.J. Jeffray, London, 12 April 1893, Young Ms., Private Letterbook, p. 3.

³⁷ Charles Young, Kalamia, to Messrs. Young, Ehlers & Co., London, 24 June 1895, Young Ms., Private Letterbook, p. 96; Charles Young, Kalamia, to the Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, 18 March 1898, Young Ms., Company Letterbook, p. 32.

³⁸ T.T.O., Vols. 23/229, 28/236, 99/4, 100/75, 101/1, 1901/1,3,4.

³⁹ Details on the U.M.A. Co. and Australian Estates were obtained from notes prepared by the staff of the Archives of Business and Labour, Canberra.

Australian Estates, upon assuming control of Kalamia and Seaforth plantations, obviously decided that to make the estates pay they needed to expand the amount of plantation grown sugar-cane, for the leases over blocks at Airdmillan, Chiverton and Ivanhoe were renewed in 1896 for another five years and two new leases were secured over areas at Airdmillan and Burke's, near Ayr (see Figure 6.4). An additional 200 acres at Klondyke was also obtained in early 1898, when Australian Estates entered into a tenancy with Drysdale Bros., who had themselves only leased the land at Klondyke in mid-1897. Altogether these leases provided Australian Estates with over 1,500 acres of extra land for sugar-cane cultivation, although Charles Young noted that they were also necessary because of Kalamia Mill's shortage of firewood - the practice of cutting mangroves for firewood had become quite unacceptable.⁴⁰

Kalamia Mill was particularly favoured indeed by the new lands leased by Australian Estates. It received necessary supplies of firewood and in 1898 the Manager of Kalamia Mill anticipated crushing 200 acres more plantation grown cane than in 1895. In contrast, Seaforth Mill in April 1898 was planning to crush 350 acres less plantation grown cane than in 1895.⁴¹ This situation arose probably because James Mackenzie was forced to rest exhausted ground, for Australian Estates did not provide Seaforth Mill with any additional land when the lease over the block at Ivanhoe was renewed in 1896. Instead, Australian Estates in late 1896 and early 1897 was considering dividing Seaforth plantation into eighteen small farms.⁴²

Australian Estates' attempts to expand the supply of plantation grown cane to at least Kalamia Mill did not initially result in its Lower

⁴⁰ Charles Young, Kalamia, to R.J. Jeffray, London, 30 March 1895, Young Ms., Private Letterbook, p. 3. See also Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, 29 November 1897, M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book No. 2, p. 383; and Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, 17 January 1898, M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book No. 2, p. 494.

⁴¹ For details on the acreage harvested from Kalamia and Seaforth estates, 1894-1898, see E.M. Long, "Report on Kalamia and Seaforth, Lower Burdekin, Qld., 17 January 1898", A.N.U., Archives of Business and Labour, A.E.R., 165/305; and Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, 20 April 1898, M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book No. 3, p. 235.

⁴² Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, 29 December 1896, M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book No. 1, p. 287; Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, 16 March 1897, M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book No. 1, p. 399.

Burdekin properties returning a profit. In late 1896 Australian Estates noted that their Lower Burdekin estates had made a loss in 1895, although no figures were provided as to the extent of this loss.⁴³ Over the next two years both plantations again failed to return a profit (see Table 6.2). To alleviate this situation, Charles Young in early 1898 again advised Australian Estates of his belief - expressed as early as 1893- that it was still necessary to turn Kalamia into a central mill supplied by small farmers.⁴⁴ Such a suggestion did eventuate in the mid-1900s, but in order to obviate their continued losses, Australian Estates decided to close Seaforth Mill after the 1898 crushing season. Parts of its machinery were used to upgrade Kalamia Mill, which from 1899 handled all the cane grown at Seaforth. A fuller discussion on why Australian Estates decided upon this course of action will be provided in Chapter 6.6, for it was associated with the efforts by the Lower Burdekin small farmers to establish a central mill in the district.

Table 6.2. Losses and profits (in £) incurred by
Kalamia and Seaforth Plantations, 1896-1901

	1896	1897	1898	1899	1900	1901
Kalamia Estate	4614	6192	734	16888	10800	11588+
Seaforth Estate	11627	3620	3400+	amalgamated with Kalamia		

+ a profit

Sources: A.N.U., Archives of Business and Labour, A.E.R., 165/136, Mail Letterbook No. 1, pp. 123, 686, 900, 938.
M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book, No. 2, p. 438.
M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book, No. 8, p. 142.

In contrast to Australian Estates' poor financial returns from its Lower Burdekin properties, Drysdale Bros. made profits each year from the operations at Pioneer plantation in the 1890s. Consequently, they were able to pay a ten and a five per cent dividend to their shareholders in 1896 and 1897 respectively.⁴⁵ Such sound economic performance by Drysdale Bros. was undoubtedly linked to being able to secure a larger

⁴³ Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, to the Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, 23 October 1896, A.N.U., Archives of Business and Labour, Mail Letterbook No. 1, p. 60.

⁴⁴ Charles Young, Kalamia, to W.V. Brown, Townsville, 1 April 1893, Young Ms., Private Letterbook, p. 1; Charles Young, Kalamia, to the Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, 15 April 1898, Young Ms., Company Letterbook, pp. 64-65.

⁴⁵ P.M.B., Pioneer Estate's Annual Balance Sheets, 1892-1901.

supply of cane than Australian Estates. This situation arose because of a combination of three reasons: first, Pioneer Mill was supplied by a greater number of small farmers than Kalamia and Seaforth Mills (discussed more fully in Chapter 6.5); second, Drysdale Bros. expanded their own cultivation in the late 1890s to include areas at Klondyke; and third, Pioneer Mill was upgraded in 1895 by the installation of electric lighting, so the factory could work night shift, and by the addition of new crushing mills in 1899.⁴⁶

The capacity for Australian Estates and Drysdale Bros. to undertake plantation agriculture on an expanded scale in the 1890s was dependent on being able to secure an adequate labour force. Although new Melanesian recruits arrived on the Lower Burdekin in most years in the 1890s (see Table 6.3), both Australian Estates and Drysdale Bros. were forced to employ Japanese labourers throughout the decade so as to maintain their plantation workforces at acceptable levels. Using the firm Bowden Bros. as their agents, the Lower Burdekin planters obtained indentured Japanese workers on a three year contract basis.⁴⁷ As early as 1894 Drysdale Bros. employed 50 Japanese on their plantation. By 1898 this number had grown to 115, but in 1902 only 57 remained (see Table 6.4). Unfortunately, figures on the number of Japanese workers at Kalamia could only be located for two years. In 1899 and June 1901 there were 119 and 69 Japanese respectively on Kalamia plantation.⁴⁸ The Japanese, who mainly worked in the mills, certainly never outnumbered the Melanesian labourers on Pioneer Estate (see Table 6.4), nor most likely on Kalamia and Seaforth plantations. The above figures also suggest that the number of Japanese working on the Lower Burdekin declined quickly in the early 1900s. This occurred because the planters probably were unable to renew indentures or secure new Japanese workers, given the 1900 agreement between Queensland and Japan limiting the numbers of Japanese in the colony and the introduction of the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901 which prevented the importation of

⁴⁶ S.J.T.C., 4 (1895): 9; Anon., Pioneer Sugar Mills (Pty.) Ltd. 1884-1958 (n.p.: Pioneer Sugar Mills (Pty.) Ltd., 1958), p. 12.

⁴⁷ Anon., Kalamia Sugar Mill: The First Hundred Years (n.p.: C.S.R., 1984), p. 5. See also J.C.U., PMR/(CON/J) Box 3: Contracts between Drysdale Bros. of Pioneer Plantation, Nth Qld. by their agents Bowden Bros. & Co. Ltd. of Yokohama, Japan and Port Kennedy, Qld. and Japanese labourers.

⁴⁸ K.M.A., Account Journal, 1897-1904, p. 111; Queenslander, 8 June 1901, p. 1108.

**Table 6.3. The Number of Melanesians Employed
on the Lower Burdekin, 1892-1901**

Year	New Arrivals	Total Population	Deaths	Number of Employers
1892	0	536	22	—*
1893	45	369	9	7
1894	147	399	19	13
1895	110	520	15	18
1896	0	474	5	23
1897	190	547	11	28
1898	0	336	8	43
1899	86	500	14	38
1900	0	600	7	28
1901	183	491	11	38
1902	62	535	8	24
1903	230	603	15	27
1904	0	473	14	27

* Figures not provided.

Source: Assembled on the basis of figures provided in the Annual Reports of the Queensland Department of Pacific Island Immigration, 1894-1902, in Q.V.P. and Q.P.P.

**Table 6.4. The Number of Melanesians and Japanese Employed
on Pioneer Estate at the time of inspection by the
Inspector of Pacific Islanders, 1894-1901**

Year	Melanesians	Japanese	Time of Inspection
1894	200	50	January
1895	183	65	January
1896	232	65	January
1897	233	78	September
1898	219	114	January
1899	201	101	January
1900	180	95	March
1901	193	53	February
1901	211	57	March

Source: Assembled on the basis of figures provided in J.C.U., PMR/JA1-JA4.

labour under contract.⁴⁹

Drysdale Bros., besides employing Japanese and Melanesians, also had a small number of Chinese and Malays working on Pioneer Estate in the 1890s.⁵⁰ It is reasonable to assume that Kalamia and Seaforth plantations also employed various numbers of other Asian workers throughout the decade, although Charles Young complained in 1898 that he did not want to let his staff of Melanesians get so low that he had to employ Chinese, as he found they were "very clever in the way of keeping up wages and contract prices".⁵¹ Despite being able to secure both Asiatic and Melanesian labourers, at least Kalamia plantation was reported as experiencing periodic labour shortages throughout the 1890s.⁵² This lack of workers probably also contributed to the poor financial returns of that plantation referred to earlier.

Lastly, it would appear that the expansion of cultivation by the planters ensured the majority of the Lower Burdekin's cane crushed in the late 1890s continued to be grown on the plantations (see Table 6.5). Indeed, if the tonnage of cane harvested by the planters is combined with the amount harvested by the plantation lessees, then at least seventy-five per cent of the cane grown on the Lower Burdekin in the 1890s was still located on plantation lands. However, between 1897 and 1901 the district's small growers managed to harvest between twenty-five and thirty-five per cent of the annual Lower Burdekin sugar crop. This amount was certainly much greater than what the small growers managed to contribute to the annual crops in the 1880s. The re-emergence of small sugar-cane farmers on the Lower Burdekin in the 1890s will now be considered.

⁴⁹ R. Norris, The Emergent Commonwealth (Melbourne: Melbourne Uni. Press, 1975), pp. 93-95.

⁵⁰ Deduced from an examination of Drysdale Bros.' cheque books for the 1890s, which listed the names of those who were paid wage cheques (see J.C.U., PMR/CJ1 and PMR/CJ2).

⁵¹ Charles Young, Kalamia, to the Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., 28 March 1898, Young Ms., Company Letterbook, p. 49.

⁵² Charles Young, Kalamia, to R.J. Jeffray, London, 12 April 1893, Young Ms., Private Letterbook, p. 3; Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, 21 July 1896, M.U.A.; A.E.R. London Office Book No. 1, p. 16; Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, 21 September 1898, M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book No. 3, p. 456; Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, 8 August 1900, M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book No. 6, p. 140.

Table 6.5. Tons of Cane Crushed on the Lower Burdekin
Classified by its Grower, 1897-1901

Grower	1897	1898*	1899	1900	1901
Planter	64506	52312	53388	24364+	39244**
Plantation Lessees	10238	17364	11605	14462	19022
Other Farmers	12421	21711	18068	12214	16357
TOTAL	87165	91387	88061	51040	74623

* Does not include figures from Seaforth plantation, Kalamia plantation figures were also only estimates.

+ Does not include figures for Kalamia and Seaforth plantations.

** Does not include figures for Kalamia plantation.

Source: Compiled from the tons of cane delivered to the various mills. These amounts are to be found in:
J.C.U., PMR JA/3, pp. 126-127 (1897); pp. 426, 454-55, 481-82, 504-5, 512 (1898); pp. 641-663 (1898); J.C.U., PMR/[MISC/2] Box 11, Articles 11, 12 and 14.
M.U.A., A.E.R., Letterbook 2, p. 424; K.M.A., Account Journal, 1897-1904, pp. 180-82; Charles Young, Kalamia, to the Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, 16 April 1898, Young Ms., Company Letterbook, p. 67, K.M.A., Manager's Instructions and Memoranda Book, 1898-1901, p. 21.

6.5 THE GROWTH IN SMALL FARMERS

As mentioned earlier, the 1890s was a decade in which there was a significant expansion in the number of small cane farmers in Queensland. This feature of the industry was also observable on the Lower Burdekin. As early as 1892 it was reported that the Lower Burdekin planters were making arrangements with small selectors for the future purchase of their cane.⁵³ This evidence suggests that some small farmers in the district had recommenced or were planning to commence the cultivation of the crop. Such regained confidence in sugar growing was a result of the anticipated revival in the trade in Melanesians or the realization that no other crop besides maize could profitably be grown on the Lower Burdekin in the near future. Whatever the case, Griffith's decision to allow the re-introduction of Pacific Island labourers into Queensland was "hailed with delight" at a meeting of the Lower Burdekin Farmers'

⁵³ S.J.T.C., 1, 5(1892): 96; J.C.U., PMR/[C.T/1] Box 7, Article 14: Memorandum of agreement between Drysdale Bros. and Kelly Bros., 1 January 1892.

Association in April 1892.⁵⁴

Between 1893 and 1895 there was clear evidence of an increase in the number of small cane farmers on the Lower Burdekin. Pioneer Mill was supplied by seven small growers in 1893. This number had grown to seventeen in 1895 (see Table 6.6). The majority of these small farmers were tenants of Drysdale Bros. and located at Colevale and Labatt Lagoon. They were able to send their crops to Pioneer Mill by the tramlines built to both localities by Drysdale Bros. in the early 1890s.⁵⁵ John Drysdale at the time of the building of these tramlines was reputed to have designed a farm-side ramp for the easy loading of cane on tramway trucks (see Plate 8). The provision of such ramps and tramlines throughout the district undoubtedly assisted the small farmers who no longer had to transport their cane to Pioneer Mill by horse and wagon, as had been the case in the 1880s.

According to Charles Young, Kalamia Mill had some cane grown for it by small farmers in 1893, although the number of growers was not given.⁵⁶ However, it is reasonable to assume that two farmers supplied the mill in 1893, for Kalamia in 1894 crushed the cane from two small farmers who were located at Airdmillan on land leased from the A.N.Z.M. Co.⁵⁷ Seaforth Mill also purchased a small amount of cane from an unidentified number of farmers in 1894.⁵⁸ It was most likely that the majority of Kalamia and Seaforth's small growers continued to supply the mills in 1895.

There was a further increase in the number of small farmers supplying Pioneer Mill in 1896, mainly as a result of eleven settlers at Mirrigan and Airville sending approximately 2,000 tons of cane to Drysdale Bros.' factory. An additional 3,000 tons harvested by the Airville and Mirrigan farmers was crushed at Kalamia Mill, but all of this cane was grown for the Jarvisfield Central Mill which was supposed to be

⁵⁴ N.Q.H., 6 April 1892, p. 12.

⁵⁵ J.C.U., PMR/[C.T/1] Box 7, Article 14: Memorandum of agreement between Drysdale Bros. and Kelly Bros., 1 January 1892.

⁵⁶ Charles Young, Kalamia, to William V. Brown, Townsville, 1 April 1893, Young Ms., Private Letterbook, p. 1.

⁵⁷ N.Q.H., 25 April 1894, p. 19.

⁵⁸ Charles Young, Kalamia, to John S. Hill, London, 20 August 1894, Young Ms., Private Letterbook. Loose letter.

Table 6.6. The Number of Suppliers per Locality In Pioneer Mill's Catchment Area, 1893-1901

Locality	1893	1894	1895	1896	1897	1898	1899	1900	1901
Pioneer Estate	0	1	2	2	4	6	5	6	7
Labatt Lagoon	3	4	8	7	9	10	11	10	10
Colevale	1	2	3	3	3	3	4	5	4
Airville	1	1	1	3	2	5	7	8	5
Maidavale	1	0	1	0	5	3	3	2	2
Mirrigan	0	0	1	10	10	13	14	13	11
Other	1	0	0	2	1	1	3	2	1
Unknown	0	2	1	2	2	1	6	4	2
TOTAL	7	10	17	29	36	42	53	50	42

Note: The high number of unknowns in 1899 and 1900 are due to the inability to locate three Chinese farmers each year.

Source: Constructed from lists of Pioneer Mill suppliers provided in J.C.U., PMR/JA/1-JA/2 (1892-1900) and J.C.U., PMR [MISC/2] Box 11, Article 14: Records of Cane Deliveries, 1900-1910, after consultation with A.S.C., Rate Books, 1893-94; Q.E.R., 1893-1901, and selection files (see Q.S.A., LAN/DF 4819-4828).

Table 6.7. The Number of Suppliers per Locality in Kalamia Mill's Catchment Area, 1898-1901

Locality	1898	1899	1900	1901
Kalamia Estate	0	0	0	0
Chiverton	0	0	0	1
New Kalamia	5	3	2	2
Airdmillan	2	3	3	4
Seaforth	0	1	1	0
Mirrigan	0	0	0	1
Unknown	0	1	1	0
TOTAL	7	8	7	8

Source: Constructed from lists of Kalamia Mill suppliers provided in K.M.A., Account Journal, 1897-1904, pp. 180-82, 235-6, after consultation with Q.E.R., 1898-1901, and land files (see T.T.O., Vols. 20/189. 30/157, 114/93).



Plate 8 Melanesian labourers loading cane at a farm-side ramp reputedly designed by John Drysdale. Date unknown.

Photo: Courtesy of John Oxley Library.



Plate 9 A locomotive bringing loaded cane to Pioneer Mill, c. 1900.

Photo: I. Robertson, Pioneer Sugar Mill - 100 Years (n.p.: Pioneer Sugar Mills LTD., 1984), p.8.

operational in 1896.

Details on the origin and fate of the scheme to build the Jarvisfield Central Mill are provided more fully later, but for the purposes of this section it is useful to know that its main supporters were small selectors located at Mirrigan and Airville. The Jarvisfield Central Mill Co. had made arrangements for all of their supporters' cane to be crushed at Kalamia in 1896, yet some of the small farmers decided to send their cane to Pioneer Mill. Indeed, when attempts to have the Jarvisfield Central Mill built by the commencement of the 1897 crushing season failed, the majority of the scheme's supporters decided to divert their 1897 crops to Pioneer Mill for crushing. Accordingly, Pioneer was supplied by thirty-six growers in 1897 (see Table 6.6). In contrast, Kalamia Mill was supplied probably by no more than five growers in 1897.

Drysdale Bros., it is reasonable to assume, realized the importance of permanently securing the supply of cane from the Mirrigan and Airville farmers. In order to do so, Drysdale Bros. offered to extend its tramline to Airville in readiness for the 1899 crushing season if the small farmers agreed to send their crops exclusively to Pioneer Mill for the next decade. The small farmers, it is reasonable to believe, had little option but to accept the offer, given the lack of viable alternative crops they could cultivate, the failure of the Jarvisfield Central Mill Scheme and the lengthy distance they would be required to cart their sugar-cane if they decided to supply Kalamia or Seaforth Mills. Indeed, thirteen farmers at Mirrigan and Airville had accepted Drysdale Bros.' terms by late 1897.⁵⁹

The extension of Drysdale Bros.' tramline to Airville in 1898 undoubtedly encouraged more farmers in its general vicinity to grow cane, for in 1900 twenty farmers at Mirrigan and Airville supplied Pioneer Mill, compared to twelve in 1897 (see Table 6.6). In addition, Pioneer Mill at the turn of the century continued to accept cane from other localities, most notably Colevale and Labatt Lagoon (see Figure 6.6 and Table 6.6). However, there was an overall drop in the number of growers sending their cane to the factory after 1899; a consequence most likely of the low rainfall in 1900 (see Table 3.4) causing the loss of some growers' crops and the abandonment of planting for the 1901 season by other farmers.

⁵⁹ J.C.U., PMR/[C.T/1] Box 7, Articles 30-42: Memoranda of agreement between Drysdale Bros. and various farmers, 27 November 1897.

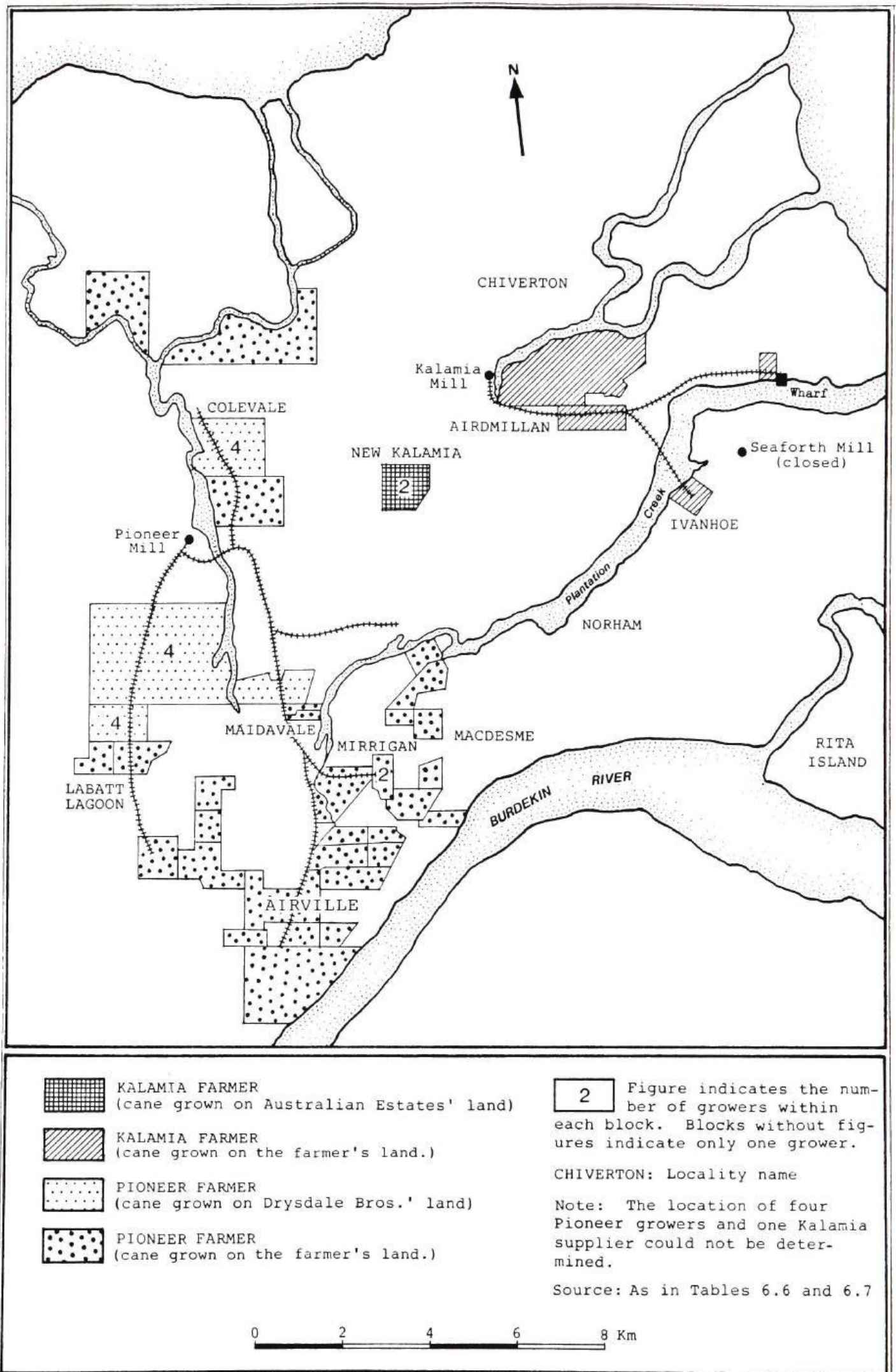


Figure 6.6 The location of farmers supplying Pioneer and Kalamia Mills, 1900.

Records relating to the number of growers supplying Kalamia Mill between 1895 and 1897 are lacking. However, in 1895 Charles Young reported that he had leased 185 acres of Kalamia Estate to tenant farmers.⁶⁰ Some of these settlers undoubtedly supplied Kalamia Mill in 1896 and 1897 and were most likely also amongst the seven farmers who were listed as sending cane to Kalamia Mill in 1898 (see Table 6.7).

The majority of Kalamia's growers in 1898 were located on Australian Estates' land at New Kalamia. However, by 1901 half of the mill's growers were now situated at Airdmillan, although overall Kalamia was still supplied by only eight farmers (see Table 6.7). It would appear that Australian Estates not only had difficulty in keeping its tenant farmers at New Kalamia, but found it harder than Drysdale Bros. to secure growers for its mill.

The difficulty Australian Estates had in obtaining farmers willing to grow cane for Kalamia Mill in the 1890s occurred because of a combination of three reasons. First, the factory was poorly located in relation to the Lower Burdekin yeoman settlers. It was bounded to the north by coastal plains and mangroves (see Figure 3.2), bordered by the town of Ayr Reserve to the south and flanked on the south-east by Airdmillan Estate, which remained intact during the 1890s. Second, it appeared the A.N.Z.M. Co., the owners of Airdmillan Estate, refused to co-operate with the management at Kalamia in attempting to settle farmers on Airdmillan Estate. Indeed, Charles Young advised Australian Estates in 1898 that it was even difficult to get those farmers settled at Airdmillan to sign a contract to supply Kalamia for more than two years as they did not know if the A.N.Z.M. Co. would renew their leases on satisfactory terms.⁶¹ Third, much of Kalamia Estate consisted of grazing lands, so it was not even easy for Charles Young to lease suitable plantation lands to prospective tenants. In contrast, Pioneer Mill was within a reasonable distance to small blocks occupied by their owners. These settlers could be enticed to grow cane for the mill. Also, Drysdale Bros. in the late 1890s had an abundance of suitable sugar growing land which could be leased to tenants, for as mentioned earlier they had just purchased part of Mount Gemmell Estate.

⁶⁰ Charles Young, Kalamia, to Edward Long, Mackay, 29 April 1895. Young Ms., Private Letterbook, p. 120.

⁶¹ Charles Young, Kalamia, to the Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, 2 July 1898, Young Ms., Company Letterbook, p. 106.

Details on the number of small growers who supplied Seaforth Mill between 1896 and its closure in 1898 were difficult to determine. Certainly, there is reference to a Chinese small farmer - named Ah Way - growing cane for Seaforth. He cultivated forty-six acres in 1897 and it was reported he planned to grow 100 acres in 1898. Ah Way requested a tramline be built to his farm at Macdesme, but Australian Estates refused his request.⁶² Besides Ah Way, it is reasonable to assume that one or two other farmers may have sent their cane to Seaforth during the mid-1890s. However, it is probable that James Mackenzie, Manager at Seaforth Mill, also had difficulties in obtaining farmers willing to cultivate cane for the factory. Indeed, like Kalamia Mill, Seaforth in the 1890s was also poorly located in relation to the Lower Burdekin yeoman settlers. To the north and east of Seaforth Mill were mangroves and coastal salt flats and bordering on the south were Jarvisfield, Norham and Ivanhoe estates which, as mentioned earlier, remained intact during the 1890s.

Who were the persons attracted to cane farming on the Lower Burdekin in the 1890s? There is ample evidence to conclude that the majority of the district's small cane farmers during the decade were of Anglo-Saxon origin. However, from 1897 onwards approximately a fifth were southern European or Chinese (see Table 6.8) and together they contributed on average fifteen per cent of the cane crushed on the Lower Burdekin in the late 1890s (see Table 6.9). The presence of Chinese and southern European farmers on the Lower Burdekin aroused considerable hostility from the Anglo-Saxon dominated Lower Burdekin Farmers' Association, which complained about their "cut-throat practices" of offering Melanesians higher wages to work on their farms.⁶³

In the majority of cases, the Chinese and southern European sugar growers on the Lower Burdekin in the late 1890s leased their farms from the planters, although as will be seen later in this discussion, some of the Chinese leased land from other settlers in the district. Of the five farmers who were classified as southern Europeans, three were originally amongst the Piedmontese labourers who had been brought to North Queensland in 1891 on the Jumma, whilst a fourth was a Maltese who had

⁶² Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, to the Sec. A.E.M. Co., London, 21 December, 1897, M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book, No. 2, p. 434.

⁶³ Progress, 15 April 1899, p. 7.

Table 6.8. Racial Composition of the Lower Burdekin Farmers,
1893-1901

	1893	1894	1895	1896	1897	1898	1899	1900	1901
Anglo-Saxon	7	9	16	27	28	41	46	45	42
Chinese	0	1	1	1	4	5	8	7	4
Southern European	0	0	0	1	4	3	5	5	4
TOTAL	7	10	17	29	36	49	59	57	50

Note: Figures to 1897 are only based on lists of suppliers for Pioneer Mill.

Source: Constructed from the lists of growers located in the records acknowledged in Tables 6.2 and 6.3 after consultation with Q.E.R., 1890-1901.

Table 6.9. Tons of Cane Harvested by Different Racial Groups
on the Lower Burdekin, 1893-1901

	1893	1894	1895	1896	1897	1898	1899	1900	1901
Anglo-Saxon	-	-	8192 (77)	13504 (73)	19416 (85)	-	26205 (88)	2251 (85)	30978 (88)
Chinese	-	-	2508 (23)	4887 (26)	2284 (10)	-	2866 (10)	1948 (7)	2212 (6)
Southern European	-	-	0 (1)	48 (1)	959 (5)	-	602 (2)	2207 (8)	2189 (6)
TOTAL	-	-	10700	18439	22659	-	29673	26676	35379

Notes: (1) Incomplete figures available for 1893, 1894 and 1898.

(2) The figure in brackets refers to the percentage of the amount of cane harvested by each group.

(3) Figures to 1897 are only based on lists of suppliers for Pioneer Mill.

Source: As in Table 6.5.

been recruited by A.C. Macmillan for Airdmillan plantation in 1883.⁶⁴ Nothing, however, is known about the Chinese farmers on the Lower Burdekin in the 1890s, except that the most influential was William Ching Do, who farmed at Colevale and operated a store at Brandon. Ching Do - a naturalized British subject after 1895 - was held in high regard by both Drysdale Bros. and Charles Young.⁶⁵ It is reasonable to assume that it was his influence and contacts that helped the planters organize leases with other Chinese wishing to become tenants on their lands.

Besides being Chinese, Ching Do was one of the largest growers on the Lower Burdekin in the late 1890s. He belonged to a group of farmers (e.g. A.C. Macmillan, W. Payard, G. Campbell, W. Craig, L. Hoey) who supplied the mills each year with over 800 tons of cane (see Table 6.10). In contrast, the majority of Ching Do's farming contemporaries in the 1890s managed to harvest between 200 and 800 tons of cane a year. However, there were very small growers of cane in the 1890s, for in each year some farmers delivered under 100 tons of cane to the mills. These figures suggest that a number of farmers on the Lower Burdekin in the 1890s were either capable of growing only small crops of cane or were willing to invest in the cultivation of only a few acres of the crop.

Unfortunately it is not possible to expand much further on the size of the farming operations undertaken by the small cane grower on the Lower Burdekin in the 1890s. Documentation of the acreages grown by the small cane farmer is very fragmentary. In addition, official statistics on the number of farmers on the Lower Burdekin in the 1890s cultivating specific acreages includes all crops, not just sugar-cane. However, it is reasonable to conclude from the official figures presented in Table 6.11 that the majority of small cane farmers on the Lower Burdekin in the 1890s grew between twenty and fifty acres of cane. Some of the farmers, however, would have cultivated larger areas. This is confirmed by the surviving historical documents which record one Kalamia grower in 1896 as having 100 acres under cane and two growers in 1898 as having 100 acres and 200 acres respectively under cane.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Manning, In their own hands, p. 262.

⁶⁵ Connolly, John Drysdale and the Burdekin, p. 112; Charles Young to the Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, 27 August 1898, Young Ms., Company Letterbook, p. 128; Q.S.A., A/17813, No. 16 of 1895.

⁶⁶ Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, 24 April 1897, M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book, No. 1, p. 450; K.M.A., Account Journal, 1897-1904, p. 67.

Table 6.10. The Number of Lower Burdekin Farmers Classified by the Tons of Cane Harvested, 1895-1901

Year	<100	101-400	401-800	>801	Totals
1895	1	5	7	4	17
1896	6	7	9	7	29
1897	8	15	7	6	36
1898	6	12	11	13	42
1899	5	31	15	10	61
1900	24	14	10	9	57
1901	6	22	11	11	50

Notes: (1) Figures prior to 1895 were not available.

(2) Figures to 1898 are only based on the lists of suppliers for Pioneer Mill.

Source: As in Tables 6.5, 6.6 and 6.7.

Table 6.11. The Number of Farms in the Ayr Petty Sessions District Classified by the Acreage Cultivated, 1892-1901

Year	<5	5-20	21-50	>50	Totals
1892	2	16	19	8	45
1893	1	18	18	11	48
1894	1	14	14	14	43
1895	1	11	25	21	58
1896	2	13	25	21	58
1897	3	8	18	33	62
1898	5	9	23	33	70
1899	2	7	34	31	74
1900	Figures not provided				
1901	Figures not provided				

Source: Reports of the Registrar-General on the Returns of Agricultural and Livestock Statistics in Q.V.P.

The increase in the number of yeomen cane farmers in Queensland in the 1890s did not result in a reduction in the industry's reliance on Melanesian workers, as had been hoped for by the Liberal politicians. Indeed, the colony's small sugar-cane farmers willingly employed Melanesians during the 1890s.⁶⁷ On the Lower Burdekin there were seven employers of Melanesians in 1893, but by 1901 thirty-eight persons in the region employed Melanesians (see Table 6.3). It is reasonable to assume that most of these employers were small cane growers, as only two plantations operated on the Lower Burdekin in 1901. Furthermore, the figures suggest that unlike the planters, the Lower Burdekin small farmers before 1896 employed between one and five Melanesians.⁶⁸ After 1896 figures on the number of Melanesians engaged per employer on the Lower Burdekin are absent, although it is reasonable to assume that the same pre-1896 pattern existed, with only the largest of the small farmers employing ten or more Melanesians.

As employers of Melanesians the small farmers obviously competed with the planters for labour. Indeed, Shlomowitz in his study on markets for time-expired and indentured Melanesian labourers in Queensland found that the small farmers preferred to employ time-expired Melanesians, who were less susceptible to disease, already trained and did not cost anything to recruit.⁶⁹ As such, the small farmers tended to attract the best workers away from the planters. On the Lower Burdekin there is at least one recorded instance of the district's small farmers luring Melanesians away from the plantations. In 1898 Charles Young complained that Kalamia's time-expired Melanesians were being offered higher wages to go and work on the small farms.⁷⁰ It is reasonable to assume that the Lower Burdekin small farmers tried to attract the best workers away from the plantations not just in 1898, but throughout all of the 1890s. Nevertheless, there are two reports in the 1890s of small

⁶⁷ Shlomowitz, "Markets for Indentured and Time-Expired Melanesian Labour in Queensland, 1863-1906", pp. 87, 89-90; Bolton, A Thousand Miles Away, p. 242; Moore, Kanaka, p. 163.

⁶⁸ Q.S.A., IPI, 11/1.

⁶⁹ Shlomowitz, "Markets for Indentured and Time-Expired Melanesian Labour in Queensland, 1863-1906", p. 89.

⁷⁰ Charles Young, Kalamia, to J.E. Davidson, Mackay, 9 April 1898. Young Ms., Company Letterbook, p. 61.

farmers on the Lower Burdekin recruiting their own Melanesians.⁷¹ It would seem at least some of the district's cane growers perhaps had difficulty in obtaining time-expired labourers and were prepared to go to the expense of recruiting new workers.

The Liberal politicians in the early 1890s, through their support for government-funded central mills and closer settlement policies had also hoped to create in Queensland a class of yeomen cane farmers cultivating their own land and supplying central mills. Such policies may have worked in other regions, but they met with only limited success on the Lower Burdekin. Although a class of small cane farmer did emerge within the region by 1901, these growers continued to supply "planter owned" mills, for a cooperatively owned central mill built with government support did not eventuate. Moreover, from the mid-1890s onwards over fifty per cent of the Lower Burdekin's small farmers were located on land leased from planters or other owners (see Table 6.12). Landlords disrupted the Liberal politicians' vision of yeomen farmers tilling their own land.

Some of the small farmers leasing land from the planters in the 1890s were associated with the plantations, usually as a present or past employee. It appears that the Lower Burdekin planters followed a procedure of leasing their lands to those that they had dealt with previously so as to secure themselves against loss by inexperienced men.⁷² In contrast, those who leased land not owned or occupied by the planters fell into no particular category. Some were Chinese or former mill employees, while one was A.C. Macmillan, the founder of the closed Airdmillan plantation. The other small cane farmers in the district in the 1890s were owner-occupiers and for the most part were the district's first settlers. For instance, in 1896 and 1901, only two and five farmers respectively out of the eighteen and twenty-one growers who supplied the mills with sugar-cane cropped on their own land had not selected their land in the region before 1888.

⁷¹ Record of the Return of 'Coquette', 19 April 1895, Q.S.A., PRE/86. This document lists the intended employers of the Melanesians recruited on the voyage. See also N.Q.H., 16 November 1901, p. 40.

⁷² Deduced from an examination of the wages cheques to Pioneer's employees in the 1890s [see J.C.U., PMR/CJ1 (1883-1898) and CJ2 (1899-1904)] and reference to the Q.E.R., 1894-1903, which the listed occupations of some tenants.

Table 6.12. Land Tenure of the Lower Burdekin Small Farmers,
1893-1901

	1893	1894	1895	1896	1897	1898	1899	1900	1901
Leased from Planter	1 (14)	4 (40)	7 (41)	6 (21)	14 (39)	19 (39)	19 (32)	19 (33)	20 (40)
Leased from Owner	0	0	1 (6)	4 (14)	2 (6)	7 (14)	10 (17)	9 (16)	8 (16)
Own Land	6 (86)	5 (50)	8 (47)	18 (62)	18 (50)	22 (45)	24 (41)	25 (44)	21 (42)
Unknown	0	1 (10)	1 (6)	1 (3)	2 (6)	1 (2)	6 (10)	4 (7)	1 (2)
TOTAL	7	10	17	29	36	49	59	57	50

Notes (1) Figures to 1897 only include growers who supplied Pioneer Mill

(2) The figures in brackets are percentages of the total number of farmers for that year.

Source: Lists of growers (as in Tables 6.6 and 6.7).
Land tenure details determined after consulting archival and
Townsville Title Office records.

Details on the types of leases entered into between land owners and tenant farmers in the 1890s are sketchy. One report noted that Ching Do & Co. leased eighty acres from John Coleman at a rental of £1 per acre. This was considered a heavy rental, exclusive of working expenses, and according to the reporter it "required both judgement and good management to make it pay".⁷³ In contrast it was observed that tenant farmers on Maidavale Estate - acquired by Australian Estates in 1897 - were charged 10s. per acre for agricultural land and 1 s. 6 d. per acre for grazing land.⁷⁴ It is reasonable to assume that Australian Estates charged a similar rental to that at Maidavale for agricultural land at Kalamia Estate, although Charles Young wrote in mid-1898 that lessees on Kalamia were allowed free of charge the use of good grass paddocks for their working horses. Australian Estates, however, charged its tenants on Kalamia for use of the plantation's irrigation system.⁷⁵ Details on the costs incurred by tenants renting agricultural land from Drysdale Bros. also could not be determined, but it was probable that they were similar to that charged by Australian Estates. Tenants of Drysdale Bros., however, could obtain water to irrigate their crops through either renting pumps supplied by Drysdale Bros. or by being charged an hourly rate for the use of the plantation's irrigation network.⁷⁶

In the above arrangements landlords obviously exercised direct control over their tenants. However, what was the extent of the planters-cum-millers' control over the remainder of the district's small farmers? First, they tried to ensure that the farmers supplied their mills exclusively for a lengthy period. For instance, as early as 1892 a number of growers agreed to send their cane exclusively to Pioneer Mill for seven years,⁷⁷ and as mentioned earlier in 1898 the small farmers located at Airville and Mirrigan agreed to send their cane only to Pioneer Mill for ten years. Second, contracts were also established to determine the price received by the farmers for their cane. As early as 1892 Drysdale Bros. agreed to accept cane from the district's farmers in return for

⁷³ N.Q.H., 27 July 1892, p. 23.

⁷⁴ Charles Young, Kalamia, to the Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, 12 November 1898, Young Ms., Company Letterbook, p. 166.

⁷⁵ Charles Young, Kalamia, to the Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, 5 May 1898, Young Ms., Company Letterbook, p. 81; K.M.A., Account Journal, 1894-1897, pp. 91, 105, 180-82.

⁷⁶ S.J.T.C., 1, 10(1892): 214; Queenslander, 8 June 1901, p. 1108.

⁷⁷ J.C.U., PMR [C.T./1] Box 7, Article 14: Memorandum of agreement between Drysdale Bros. and Kelly Bros., 1 January 1892.

payment on a sliding scale based on the amount Drysdale Bros. received for a ton of sugar in Townsville. By 1895 Drysdale Bros. still paid the farmers for their cane on a sliding scale, but based on the price Drysdale Bros. received from the C.S.R. Co. for raw sugar. For instance, if the mill owner was given between £11 and £12 for a ton of 88 n.t. sugar, the grower received 12 s. per ton of cane delivered at Pioneer Mill. For every shilling rise or fall in the price of raw sugar received by the mill owner, the farmer received a half penny more or less for cane.⁷⁸ Third, Drysdale Bros. and Australian Estates penalized growers who sent diseased, frosted or burnt cane to the mills.⁷⁹ The imposition of penalties on burnt cane is difficult to explain, as the planters on the Lower Burdekin burnt their own cane in the 1880s,⁸⁰ although the practice seems to have been abandoned in the 1890s. Also, Drysdale Bros. insisted as early as 1892 that farmers had to grow cane varieties approved by them, or the farmers' cane would not be accepted.⁸¹ It is reasonable to assume that Australian Estates also imposed such a restriction on their farmers throughout the 1890s, in order to ensure that the factories were supplied with the highest yielding cane varieties most suited to the district.

On the basis of the above evidence it would appear that the Lower Burdekin planters-cum-millers exercised absolute control over the district's farmers through a system of agreements which determined the mills the farmers must supply and the price they received for their cane. However, the emergence of this system of contractual arrangements on the Lower Burdekin in the 1890s was not unique. In other sugar growing regions, particularly those served by the C.S.R. Co. mills, it has been observed that the millowners also developed contractual agreements with

⁷⁸ S.J.T.C., 4, 4(1895): 92; Charles Young, Kalamia, to E.M. Long, Mackay, 29 April 1895, Young Ms., Private Letterbook, p. 120.

⁷⁹ J.C.U., PMR [C.T./1] Box 7, Articles 14, 22, 30-47: Memoranda of agreement between Drysdale Bros. and various farmers, 1892-1898; Charles Young, Kalamia, to the Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, 12 March 1898, Young Ms., Company Letterbook, p. 28; N.Q.H., 4 December 1899, p. 41.

⁸⁰ David Donald, Pioneer Estate, to George Drysdale, Melbourne, 4 October 1884, J.C.U., PMR/LB/7, p. 414; T.D.B., 17 November 1887; N.Q.R., 19 October 1898, p. 19.

⁸¹ J.C.U., PMR [C.T./1] Box 7, Articles 5, 14 and 22: Memoranda of agreement between Drysdale Bros., Kelly Bros. and W. Ching Do, 1 January 1892 and 15 December 1892 respectively.

the small growers.⁸² These agreements tried to ensure a farmer supplied one mill exclusively and allowed the millers to control the cane varieties planted on the farms, determine the price paid for the cane and the right to reject diseased or frosted cane. According to Higman the development of such agreements occurred because by using small farmers to grow cane for their factories, the millers "faced problems of organization and spatial control which were elsewhere overcome by plantation authoritarianism".⁸³

The Lower Burdekin small cane farmers, although required to deal with the millers who insisted on engaging them in contracts and agreements before their cane could be crushed, found that the millers were very supportive in other areas. Goods were obtainable from the mill's store at plantation prices, Melanesian or Chinese labourers and horses could be hired from the mill⁸⁴ and cash advances or liens against crops were made between farmer and millers.⁸⁵ Indeed, there appeared to be some rivalry between Drysdale Bros. and Australian Estates when it came to supporting growers, for the Italian tenant farmers at Maidavale in 1898 threatened to turn to Drysdale Bros. if Australian Estates would not advance them money. Cash was forthcoming from Australian Estates within the month.⁸⁶ Also, besides being a source of supplies and cash advances the Lower Burdekin plantations in the 1890s were a market for the limited commodities produced by the small farmers. In Pioneer Estate's and Kalamia Mill's account journals for the 1890s there are entries indicating that the planters purchased maize, firewood, and horses from the small farmers.

⁸² Bolton, A Thousand Miles Away, p. 154; Higman, "Sugar Plantations and Yeoman Farming in New South Wales", p. 710; Jones, Hurricane Lamps and Blue Umbrellas, p. 255; Kerr, Pioneer Pageant, p. 128; Nolan, Bundaberg, p. 117.

⁸³ Higman, "Sugar Plantations and Yeoman Farming in New South Wales", p. 710.

⁸⁴ Based on examination of the monthly entries in Pioneer Estate's account journals (J.C.U., PMR/JA1-JA3) and Kalamia Mill's account journal (K.M.A., Account Journal, 1897-1904.)

⁸⁵ From comments in surviving letters it appears Australian Estates accepted crop liens in the late 1890s and it is reasonable to assume Drysdale Bros. also operated such a system (see for example, Charles Young, Kalamia, to the Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, 2 April 1897, 21 May 1898, 8 April 1899, Young Ms., Company Letterbook, pp. 54, 91, 204.)

⁸⁶ Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, 6 April 1897, M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book No. 1, p. 427; Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, 24 April 1897, M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book No. 1, p. 450.

Even though the planters-cum-millers were willing to support their small growers in a variety of ways, at least Charles Young was not impressed by his dealings with them over his time on the Lower Burdekin. He believed their chief aim in life was to "get into debt as far as possible."⁸⁷ This observation would appear so, when the amount the farmers owed Drysdale Bros. at the end of each year between 1894 and 1901 is considered (see Table 6.13). Nevertheless, no documentary evidence could be located to indicate that Drysdale Bros. ever objected to carrying such farmer debts. Indeed, according to Australian Estates, Drysdale Bros. were well aware that the well being of their small farmers coincided with their own well being and as such were willing to bear their small farmers' indebtedness to the company.⁸⁸

Table 6.13. Farmer Indebtedness (in £) to Drysdale Bros
on 31 December each year from 1894-1901

1894	1895	1896	1897	1898	1899	1900	1901
1093	6364	2342	4570	2976	8285	7614	6062

Source: P.M.B., Pioneer Estate's Annual Balance Sheets, 1894-1901.

A combination of many reasons ranging from poor management, the willingness to pay Melanesian workers higher wages than the planters and low prices for their cane probably can partly explain why the Lower Burdekin small growers, particularly those who supplied Pioneer Mill, accrued such debts in the 1890s. However, it is reasonable to assume that a major contributing factor to the indebtedness of the Lower Burdekin small farmers in the 1890s was the generally low rainfall over the decade (see Table 3.4). As such, many of the small farmers who could not afford to install their own irrigation plants suffered a succession of reduced crops and incomes, which undoubtedly resulted in their need to borrow funds from the planters.

⁸⁷ Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, 20 October 1896, M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book No. 1, p. 145. See also Charles Young, Kalamia, to the Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, 9 April 1898, Young Ms., Company Letterbook, p. 57.

⁸⁸ Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, 19 January 1897, M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book No. 1, pp. 321-22.

Finally, the commencement of sugar cultivation by many of the Lower Burdekin small farmers in the 1890s caused a decline in the growing of other crops in the region. Although the Lower Burdekin small farmers were described in 1893 and 1894 as chiefly "maize growers",⁸⁹ by 1896 less than five per cent of the total acreage cropped on the Lower Burdekin was under maize (see Table 6.14). These figures suggest that the small farmers quickly abandoned cultivating maize in favour of sugar-cane. Indeed, this preference by the small farmers towards cultivating sugar-cane was maintained throughout the late 1890s, with maize continuing to account for only around three per cent of the Lower Burdekin's acreage under crop. However, in 1900 and 1901 there was a return to maize growing on the Lower Burdekin (see Table 6.14). It is reasonable to assume that the small farmers, and not the planters, increased their area under maize at this time. This situation occurred because of two factors. First, with the opening of the Ayr to Stuart tramway, it was possible to transport maize to Townsville more quickly than had been the case previously when the farmers had to rely on the coastal steamers. As such, it was possible for maize growers to receive a higher price for the crop than offered by the plantations. Second, it was observed in 1901 that small farmers, particularly those upstream on the Burdekin River, were turning to maize growing because of the expense of transporting cane to Drysdale Bros. tramway.⁹⁰ Nevertheless, it would appear in 1900 and 1901 that sugar-cane remained the favourite crop of the Lower Burdekin small farmers, particularly those closest to the district's sugar mills. Its importance as the region's staple was unchallenged.

6.6 THE JARVISFIELD CENTRAL MILL SCHEME

As mentioned previously, in 1884 and 1885 there was some interest expressed in the possibility of establishing a central mill on the Lower Burdekin, although nothing eventuated from the deliberations by the district's small farmers. However, following the re-commencement of sugar-cane cultivation by the district's small farmers in 1892 there were renewed calls for the erection of a central mill on the Lower Burdekin.⁹¹

Eventually, in January 1894 a meeting of interested settlers was held and a committee elected to investigate the possibility of erecting on the

⁸⁹ N.Q.H., 12 April 1893, p. 26; S.J.T.C., 2, 12(1894): 316.

⁹⁰ N.Q.R., 14 October 1901, p. 24; N.Q.H., 16 November 1901, p. 40.

⁹¹ S.J.T.C., 1, 5(1892): 96; N.Q.H., 12 April 1893, p. 26.

Table 6.14. Crop Acreages on the Lower Burdekin
1892-1901

	Total Acreage Under Crop	Sugar Cane	Crops Maize	Other
1892	4796	3711	902 (18.8)	183
1893	4956	4122	713 (14)	121
1894	5768	5082	583 (10)	104
1895	6479	6084	275 (4)	96
1896	6337	6089	152 (2.4)	73
1897	6921	6510	214 (3)	197
1898	8195	7818	226 (2.7)	151
1899	8042	7577	256 (3.2)	209
1900	6859	5894	662 (9.6)	303
1901	7951	6242	1285 (16.1)	424

Note: The figure in brackets refers to the acreage under maize as a percentage of the total yearly acreage under crop.

Source: Assembled from figures provided in the Annual Reports of the Registrar-General on the Returns of Agriculture and Livestock in Q.V.P.

Lower Burdekin a cooperatively owned central mill where the farmers had a financial interest in the mill to which they sent their cane for crushing.⁹²

Initially, the farmers sought support from the N.A.P.C., which expressed little interest in the project.⁹³ Following this set-back, the selectors backing the scheme decided the best course of action was to establish their own company. Accordingly, in May 1894 the Jarvisfield Central Sugar Mill Co. Ltd. was formed. Supporters of the scheme agreed to have 700 acres of cane ready for the first crushing and were prepared to lodge approximately 3,000 acres of freehold land with the Crown as security. Accompanying the plan to build the mill was a proposal for an irrigation scheme.⁹⁴

By July 1894 it was reported Dr. Ahearne had received assurances from Robert Philp, the Colonial Treasurer and Ahearne's former business partner, that the Crown had given conditional approval for the mill to be erected. As soon as an application was received a Government Valuator would be sent to the district to assess the proposal. In addition, twenty farmers were planting cane in readiness to supply the mill, Surveyor Lymburner had been employed to draw up the plans for the irrigation scheme and consideration was being given to the Articles of Association for the Company.⁹⁵

Initial enthusiasm for the Jarvisfield Central Mill proposal was not dampened by the announcement in March 1895 that the Company's Memorandum and Articles of Association had yet to be lodged with the Colonial Treasurer.⁹⁶ Indeed, in April 1895 selectors on Sheep Station Creek agreed to join the scheme, provided they could raise sufficient security to cover an advance of £12,000 to build a tramway from the Jarvisfield Mill site to the Barratta Creek landing place.⁹⁷ According to Charles Young, however, the district's small farmers supported the scheme

⁹² N.Q.H., 17 January 1894, p. 17.

⁹³ N.Q.H., 14 March 1894, p. 16.

⁹⁴ N.Q.H., 2 May 1894, p. 19; N.Q.H., 9 May 1894, p. 16.

⁹⁵ N.Q.H., 4 July 1894, p. 11; S.J.T.C., 3, 7 (1894): 151; P.D.T., 25 August 1894.

⁹⁶ N.Q.H., 27 March 1895, p. 86.

⁹⁷ N.Q.H., 24 April 1895, p. 27.

for it was realized that no crop other than sugar-cane was viable on the Lower Burdekin, and that in the event of not getting the mill they were contemplating abandoning their farms.⁹⁸

In late May 1895 the Jarvisfield Central Mill Co. Ltd. elected its first Board of Directors - Messrs H. Benjamin, W. Lynch, R. Kelly, H. Cox, J. Mackenzie and S. Benjamin.⁹⁹ They commenced planning the use of the funds advanced by the Crown to the Company earlier that month.¹⁰⁰ However, their plans were interrupted for it was reported that dissension amongst the shareholders had led to some of the supporters of the scheme severing their connection with the Company. More importantly, some of the small growers who had pledged to send their cane to the Jarvisfield Mill were arranging with John Drysdale to have their future crops crushed at Pioneer Mill.¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, in August 1895 the Jarvisfield Central Mill Co. accepted a tender from the Glasgow firm of A.W. Smith to construct machinery for the mill.¹⁰²

Nothing further is heard about the activities of the Jarvisfield Central Mill Co. until it was announced in February 1896 that Dr. Ahearne had assumed Chairmanship of the Board of Directors.¹⁰³ Under Ahearne's direction the Company adopted new strategies to try and ensure the mill was built. In April 1896 it was reported that the Company had purchased the closed Hamleigh Mill's buildings, machinery, locomotives and tramway and had negotiated with Australian Estates to have the Jarvisfield Mill supporters' cane crushed at Kalamia Mill.¹⁰⁴ The arrangement with Australian Estates was obviously undertaken in order to stop further backers of the scheme from entering into contracts with Drysdale Bros. and to allow the Directors time to finalize the erection of the Jarvisfield Mill.

⁹⁸ Charles Young, Kalamia, to Edward Long, Mackay, 29 April 1895, Young Ms., Private Letterbook, p. 120.

⁹⁹ N.Q.H., 29 May 1895, p. 27.

¹⁰⁰ S.J.T.C., 4, 4(1895): 92.

¹⁰¹ S.J.T.C., 4, 6(1895): 145.

¹⁰² N.Q.H., 21 August 1895, p. 15.

¹⁰³ N.Q.H., 19 February 1896, p. 27.

¹⁰⁴ N.Q.H., 29 April 1896, p. 28. See also The Delta Advocate, 3 September 1938.

The scheme to crush the Jarvisfield Mill supporters' crops at Kalamia Mill ended in complete failure. To facilitate the transport of the small farmers' cane to Kalamia Mill, Australian Estates were required to construct a tramline to Maidavale. However, when Kalamia Mill commenced accepting cane from the Jarvisfield Mill supporters in mid-September 1896 the tramline had only been built as far as Burke's paddock, near Ayr. Its construction had been halted due to a delay in the delivery of the Hamleigh tramway material.¹⁰⁵ By early October 1896 Charles Young reported there had been fires - possibly deliberately lit - amongst the Jarvisfield Mill supporters' crops and that Drysdale Bros. had been lending the necessary drays to take the burnt cane quickly to Pioneer Mill.¹⁰⁶ Indeed, at the end of the 1896 crushing season, over 2,000 tons of the Jarvisfield Mill supporters' cane had been sent to Pioneer.¹⁰⁷

Even before the 1896 crushing season ended it appears the Jarvisfield Central Mill Scheme was in disarray. The Government Valuator had decided that the Airdmillan lands would be more suitable for the location of the central mill and the farmers themselves had lost interest, with some pledging to supply Pioneer Mill in the future and others agreeing to support a scheme to turn Kalamia Mill into a central mill.¹⁰⁸ Australian Estates, however, were not entirely convinced this was an appropriate course of action. Concern was expressed about the wisdom of being associated with Dr. Ahearne and his followers, for the London Board described the former as "not a very desirable man" and noted the latter were "a set of insolvent farmers".¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless, in January 1897 Australian Estates decided to become involved with the

¹⁰⁵ Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, 15 September 1896, M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book No. 1, p. 66. For reference to Australian Estates building the tramway see N.Q.H., 26 August 1896, p. 27.

¹⁰⁶ Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, 13 October 1896, M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book No. 1, p. 123.

¹⁰⁷ Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, to the Gen. Man., A.E.M. Co., Melbourne, 4 December 1896, A.N.U., Archives of Business and Labour, A.E.R., 165/136 Mail Letterbook No. 1, p. 91.

¹⁰⁸ Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, to the Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, 14 August 1896, A.N.U., Archives of Business and Labour, A.E.R. 165/136 Mail Letterbook No. 1, p. 14.

¹⁰⁹ Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, to the Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., 26 November 1896 and 18 December 1896, A.N.U., Archives of Business and Labour, A.E.R., 165/136 Mail Letterbook No. 1, pp. 87, 107.

proposal to turn Kalamia Mill into the Lower Burdekin's central mill to be supplied by the Jarvisfield Mill supporters.¹¹⁰ This decision was made undoubtedly in an effort to reduce any future financial losses associated with the running of their Lower Burdekin estates.

Turning Kalamia Mill into a central mill required Australian Estates and the Jarvisfield Mill supporters to pledge their lands to the Crown as security for a Treasury loan. In return, Australian Estates would receive £10,000 in an initial cash advance, £13,000 in preferential shares in the Company and £10,000 in ordinary shares.¹¹¹ Hamleigh Mill's equipment and plant purchased by the Jarvisfield Central Mill Co. Ltd. would be incorporated into Kalamia's machinery. However, this scheme met with immediate opposition. Drysdale Bros. in early 1897 took out a lease over several subdivisions at Klondyke and announced that they would deny Australian Estates the right of access over their tramway which they had constructed through Klondyke in 1896.¹¹² In addition, the Government-Valuator advised the Crown not to sanction the scheme for:

- (a) the combined securities offered by the Jarvisfield farmers and Australian Estates only totalled £40 000 - it was estimated the new scheme would cost £55,000; and
- (b) the three mills on the Burdekin, if worked to their fullest capacity, could handle all the cane grown in the district.¹¹³

In a move which could be seen as an effort by the Crown to finally end the matter, the Treasury in May 1897 offered the Jarvisfield Central Mill Co. a £30,000 advance to combine Hamleigh Mill's machinery with that of Kalamia's. Under the financial arrangements for the loan, Australian Estates would receive just under forty per cent of the shares in the Company, obtain a second mortgage over the factory site and a personal covenant over those lands not owned by the Company for the proportion of the debt equal to a proportion of the shares. Australian Estates concluded it was not worth proceeding with the scheme, for they

¹¹⁰ Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., London, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, 23 January 1897, M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book No. 1, p. 328.

¹¹¹ N.Q.H., 10 February 1897, p. 92; Queenslander, 6 February 1897, p. 277; Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, 21 December 1896, M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book No. 1, p. 282.

¹¹² Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, to the Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, 8 January 1897, A.N.U., Archives of Business and Labour, A.E.R., 165/136, Mail Letterbook No. 1, p. 117.

¹¹³ N.Q.H., 10 February 1897, p. 32.

would have to finance the farmers, still grow their own crops, provide for irrigation and probably re-route their tramway, as Drysdale Bros. refused them access across Klondyke.¹¹⁴

The final blow to the proposal to turn Kalamia into a central mill supplied by the Jarvisfield Mill supporters came when Australian Estates were informed in late May that Drysdale Bros. was negotiating with the A.N.Z.M. Co. to lease land at Airdmillan.¹¹⁵ The possibility that Drysdale Bros. would control the land crossed by Kalamia's tramway to the Plantation Creek wharf and that several of Kalamia's small growers would not have their Airdmillan leases renewed was enough for Australian Estates to decide in July 1897 not to entertain the central mill proposal any further.¹¹⁶ This decision was further strengthened by Australian Estates' realization that they would not hold the controlling interest in a Company that was being supported by the Crown to further the interests of small farmers.¹¹⁷

Although Australian Estates decided to withdraw from the proposal to turn Kalamia into a central mill, the supporters of the scheme still hoped that a central mill could be erected on the Lower Burdekin. A report in August 1897 noted that advocates for the idea had proceeded to Brisbane to try to convince the Crown of a need for a central mill in the district.¹¹⁸ However, their efforts were in vain. A co-operatively owned central mill was not erected on the Lower Burdekin in the late 1890s, nor in the late 1900s when, as will be seen in the next chapter, growers once again tried to establish their own mill in the district.

What were the ramifications of the farmers' failure to secure the erection of a central mill on the Lower Burdekin? Firstly, Australian Estates was faced with the prospect of not being able to recover the

¹¹⁴ Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, to the Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, 14 May 1897, A.N.U., Archives of Business and Labour, A.E.R., 165/136, Mail Letterbook No. 1, pp. 211-213.

¹¹⁵ Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, 29 June 1897, M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book No. 2, p. 75.

¹¹⁶ Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, to the Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, 2 July 1897, A.N.U., Archives of Business and Labour, A.E.R., 165/136, Mail Letterbook No. 1, p. 248.

¹¹⁷ Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, 3 July 1897, M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book No. 2, p. 83.

¹¹⁸ N.Q.H., 4 August 1897, p. 34.

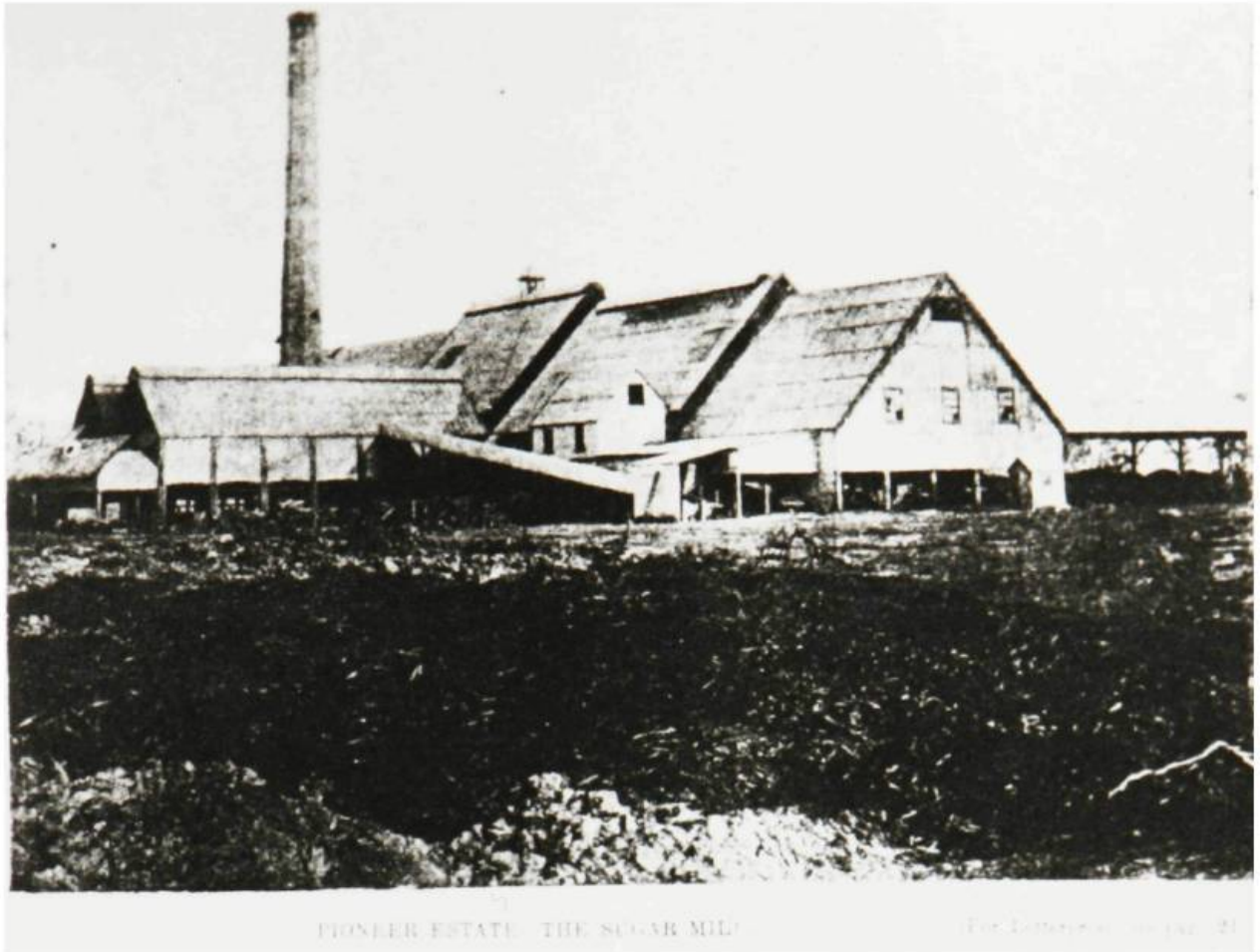


Plate 10 Pioneer Mill, 1897.

Photo: N.Q.H., 15 September 1897, p. 22.

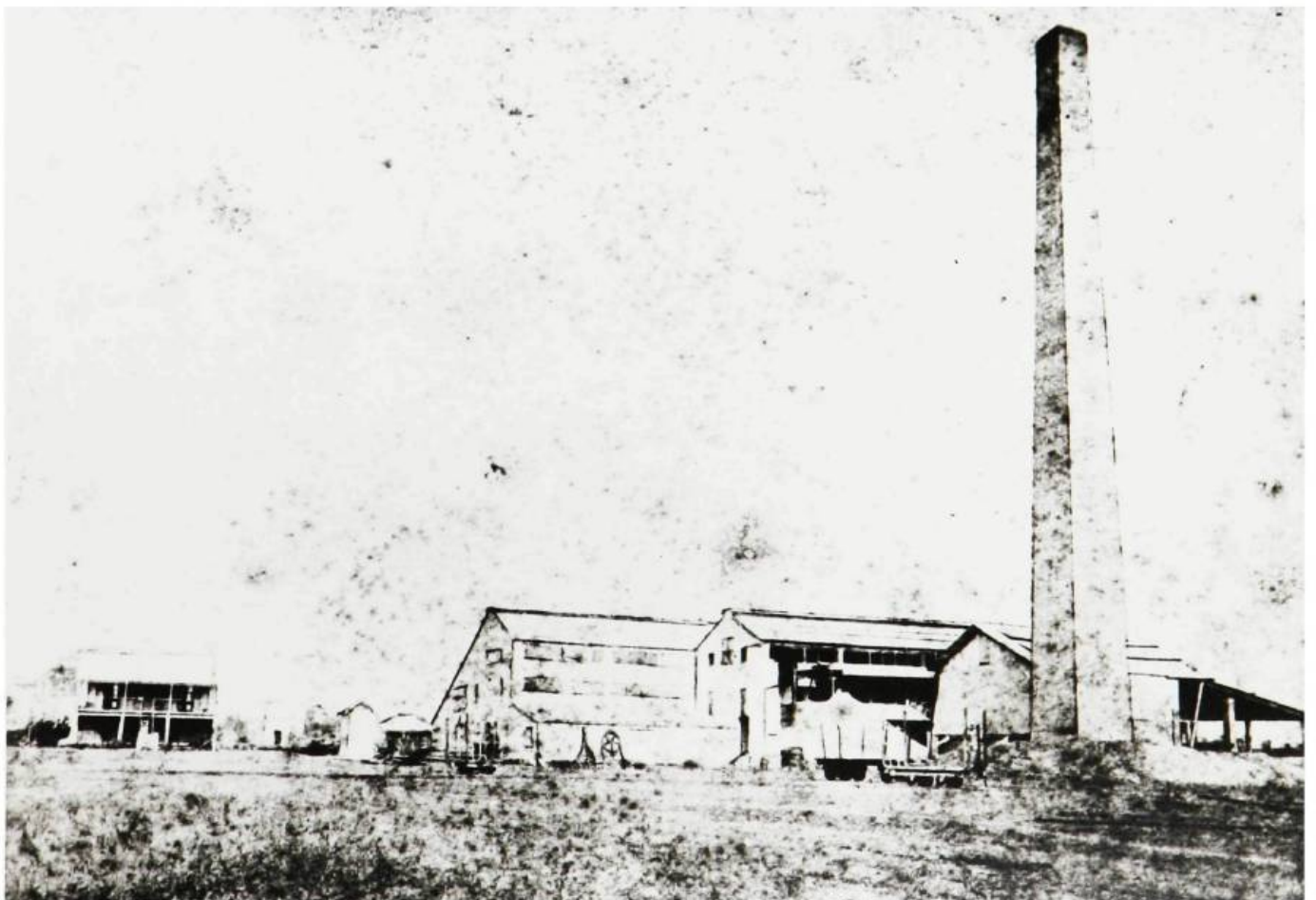


Plate 11 Seaforth Mill, c. 1895.

Photo: Courtesy of Mrs G. Mitchell, Clare.

£4,500 advanced to the Jarvisfield Central Mill Co. to secure the Hamleigh tramline materials and the £5,000 lent to Dr. Ahearne to cover the expenses associated with the setting up the central mill scheme.¹¹⁹ Indeed, Australian Estates was faced with further costs, for it had to remove the tramline built to Maidavale as the line now served no purpose and crossed Drysdale Bros.' land. Legal action to recover the advances to the Jarvisfield Central Mill Co. was abandoned in late 1898,¹²⁰ although Australian Estates took control of Maidavale, for Dr. Ahearne was in no position to repay his debts to the Company.¹²¹ However, Charles Young advised Australian Estates that Maidavale was too far away from Kalamia to be worked economically.¹²² Consequently, only a small part of it was let to some Italian farmers in the late 1890s. Eventually the estate was sold to Drysdale Bros. in 1905 (for details see Chapter 7.5.2).

The loss of money by Australian Estates in their attempt to support the central mill proposal on the Lower Burdekin was considered regrettable. However, the failure of the scheme meant Australian Estates was still no closer to solving the problem of how to stop their Lower Burdekin estates losing money, for turning Kalamia into a central mill was supposed to improve its crushing capacity and provide an enlarged cane supply.¹²³ As such, once the London Board of Australian Estates decided not to proceed with the Jarvisfield Central Mill Co.'s proposal they ordered the Melbourne Office to:

Send by mail reliable report with respect to making Kalamia effective mill, also the alternative of combining Kalamia and Seaforth Plantation mills.

You will be able to give good reasons for the abandonment of the scheme, so as to maintain friendly relations with the farmers and we trust that you will be able to resume friendly relations with Messrs. Drysdale Bros.

¹¹⁹ Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, to the Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, 14 May 1897, A.N.U., Archives of Business and Labour, A.E.R., 165/136, Mail Letterbook No. 1, p. 212.

¹²⁰ Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, 16 August 1898, M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book No. 2, p. 399.

¹²¹ T.T.O., Vol. 42/207.

¹²² Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, 7 September 1897, M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book No. 2, p. 206.

¹²³ Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, to the Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, 9 April 1897, A.N.U., Archives of Business and Labour, A.E.R., 165/136, Mail Letterbook No. 1, p. 186; Charles Young, Kalamia, to the Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, 8 January 1898, Young Ms., Company Letterbook, p. 15.

We suggest that there is no necessity for two mills, Kalamia and Seaforth, but the two could be amalgamated.¹²⁴

These instructions were expanded in September 1897 when the London Board requested resolution of the problem of having to transport their sugar to the Plantation Creek wharf on a tramway which crossed land not owned by Australian Estates. It was suggested the Melbourne Office could negotiate with the A.N.Z.M. Co. to secure a right of way over the tramline for a considerable length of time.¹²⁵

The Melbourne Office, responding to instructions, forwarded two reports to the London Office - one by Charles Young and the other by William Drysdale, brother of John Drysdale and member of Australian Estates' Melbourne Board. Charles Young advised that outlaying £5,000 to purchase a new crushing mill, three new filter presses and four new syrup subsidisers for Kalamia Mill would upgrade the factory so that it could produce 5,000 tons of sugar annually. Alternatively, this machinery plus a vacuum pan could be moved from Seaforth Mill and installed at Kalamia for under £2,000.¹²⁶ William Drysdale reported that Seaforth Mill should be closed and its machinery used to up-grade Kalamia Mill which would handle all the crops. It was also suggested that a new locomotive be purchased and an electric light installed at Kalamia so as to ensure both day and night crushing. Overall, Drysdale estimated his changes would cost £4,000.¹²⁷

The London Office of Australian Estates was not satisfied with either of these reports, claiming in particular that neither touched upon the question of management, nor the alternative of maintaining Seaforth Mill so as to deal with the sugar lands near the mill. Accordingly, they requested the Melbourne Office should seek an independent expert's

¹²⁴ Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, to the Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, 9 July 1897, A.N.U., Archives of Business and Labour, A.E.R., 165/136, Mail Letterbook No. 1, p. 253.

¹²⁵ Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, to the Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, 17 September 1897, A.N.U., Archives of Business and Labour, A.E.R., 165/136, Mail Letterbook No. 1, p. 299.

¹²⁶ Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, to the Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, 13 August 1897, A.N.U., Archives of Business and Labour, A.E.R., 165/136, Mail Letterbook No. 1, p. 275.

¹²⁷ Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, 27 September 1897, M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book No. 2, p. 235.

report.¹²⁸ After approaching several individuals involved in Queensland's sugar industry, the Melbourne Office appointed Edward Long (Manager of Habana Estate, Mackay) to report upon the Lower Burdekin properties of Australian Estates.

Briefly summarized, Long's lengthy report informed Australian Estates that over the years 1894-1896 the overall acreage under cultivation the plantations had decreased, but expenditure had increased. It was suggested that the management had been poor and there was no appreciation of the present position of the sugar industry and the absolute necessity of economical working. Furthermore, both factories were incomplete and the second mill at Kalamia was too weak for the work it was expected to handle. Long advised Australian Estates to consider implementing the following four recommendations: first, Seaforth Mill should be closed and its machinery used to upgrade Kalamia Mill so that it had three sets of rollers and an electric light; second, the tramway system should be expanded; third, a new locomotive should be purchased; and fourth, the management needed changing.¹²⁹

The Melbourne Office of the Australian Estates found Mr. Long's report most unsatisfactory, claiming that it was full of inconsistencies and critical of the management without providing proper evidence. Charles Young, also unimpressed with Long's efforts, suggested that it was virtually impossible to make Kalamia Mill pay because of the droughts, the inability of the irrigation system to water all the crops, and the inefficiency of the factory.¹³⁰ The London Board of Australian Estates expressed its disappointment with Long's report and again asked the Melbourne Office how they should proceed in this matter. The Melbourne Office replied, somewhat feebly, that the firm needed to reduce the cost of cane grown on the Lower Burdekin, for even in a favourable season like 1894 it cost 16 s. 6 d. to grow a ton of cane on the plantations, yet they only paid the farmers 12 s. per ton for their

¹²⁸ Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, to the Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, 19 November 1897, A.N.U., Archives of Business and Labour, A.E.R., 165/136, Mail Letterbook No. 1, p. 348.

¹²⁹ E.M. Long, "Report on Kalamia and Seaforth, Lower Burdekin, Qld., 17 January 1898", A.N.U., Archives of Business and Labour, A.E.R., 165/305.

¹³⁰ Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, 7 February 1898; Memo of Interview with Charles Young, re: Mr. E.M. Long's Report, 4 February 1898, A.N.U., Archives of Business and Labour, A.E.R. 165/305.

cane.¹³¹

Following the above correspondence the matter of how to make the Lower Burdekin sugar estates paying concerns appeared to occupy less of the London Board's attention in their letters to Melbourne. However, some negotiations must have been proceeding, for in April 1898 Charles Young expressed his particular dislike of a plan which had been put to him proposing the closure of both Seaforth and Kalamia Mills and the diversion of their crops to Pioneer Mill for crushing.¹³² This plan, which would have established Pioneer as the Lower Burdekin's central factory, must eventually have been considered unsuitable, for there is no further mention of it being implemented. Its place was taken, however, by a proposal to appoint John Drysdale as the General Manager of the Australian Estates' Lower Burdekin sugar properties. After protracted negotiations the Melbourne Office informed London in October 1898 that they had convinced John Drysdale to accept their offer of the position as General Manager on Kalamia and Seaforth estates.¹³³ Drysdale was given full authority to do what was necessary to make the plantations return a profit.

Drysdale's appointment as General Manager of Kalamia and Seaforth had immediate repercussions. Charles Young in late 1898 tendered six months notice of his desire to vacate the management at Kalamia Mill.¹³⁴ Indeed, in his private correspondence Young expressed his opposition to John Drysdale's appointment, maintaining that John Drysdale's pecuniary interests were Pioneer and that Kalamia and Seaforth Estates would be very secondary concerns, worked more or less to suit Pioneer.¹³⁵ Accompanying Young's resignation was the dismissal of James Mackenzie as Manager of Seaforth. Mackenzie in early 1899 tried to secure the job of Field Manager at Kalamia, vacated by John Young (brother of Charles

¹³¹ Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, 30 March 1897, M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book No. 3, p. 200.

¹³² Charles Young, Kalamia, to John E. Davidson, Mackay, 23 April 1898, Young Ms., Company Letterbook, pp. 69-70.

¹³³ Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, to the Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, 9 December 1898, A.N.U., Archives of Business and Labour, A.E.R., 165/136, Mail Letterbook No. 1, p. 669.

¹³⁴ Gen. Man., A.E.M. Co., London, to the Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, 9 December 1898, M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book No. 4, p. 3.

¹³⁵ Charles Young, Kalamia, to W. Smith, Melbourne, 29 December 1897, Young Ms., Private Letterbook, p. 241.

Young), but John Drysdale declined to appoint him to the position.¹³⁶

As a result of Mackenzie's dismissal and Young's resignation, John Drysdale emerged as the dominant force in the sugar industry on the Lower Burdekin. He had defeated the attempt to establish the Jarvisfield Central Mill and the scheme to turn Kalamia into a central mill. The farmers who supported both projects now supplied Pioneer. More importantly, Drysdale was now in charge of all the mills in the district. In addition, the Melbourne Office pointed out to the London Board that Drysdale was not a "literary man", so they were unlikely to receive many reports on what he was actually contemplating for their estates. Accordingly, John Drysdale with his local knowledge always had the upper hand in his dealings with the Melbourne and London Offices of Australian Estates.

In early 1899 John Drysdale began implementing his plan to make the Lower Burdekin properties of Australian Estates return a profit. Seaforth Mill was closed and as mentioned previously some of its machinery used to upgrade Kalamia. Cultivation was continued at Seaforth, but the crops were to be crushed at Kalamia Mill. A new tramline was built over Plantation Creek so as to link the Seaforth lands with Kalamia's tramline at Airdmillan. In addition, John Drysdale allowed graziers to secure leases over nearly 1,500 acres on Kalamia Estate.¹³⁷ Undoubtedly, this action was taken in order to begin raising revenue from idle plantation lands.

Despite the changes brought about by John Drysdale's management, Australian Estates' Lower Burdekin sugar properties made a loss of nearly £17,000 in 1899 (see Table 6.2). This loss added to the £12,000 loss on their Mackay sugar estates in 1899 caused the London Board to exclaim they could not "go on losing money at this rate year after year".¹³⁸ In

¹³⁶ Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, 28 December 1898 and 8 March 1899, M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book No. 4, pp. 140, 270; James Mackenzie, Seaforth, to John Drysdale, Pioneer Estate, 21 February 1899, J.C.U., PMR/[C.T/1] Box 7, Article 26.

¹³⁷ Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, 10 May 1899, M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book No. 4, p. 400; Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, 5 July 1899, M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book No. 5, p. 24.

¹³⁸ Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, to the Sec., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, 15 June 1900, A.N.U., Archives of Business and Labour, A.E.R., 165/136, Mail Letterbook No. 1, p. 938.

an effort to remedy the situation, the Melbourne Office interviewed John Drysdale in September 1900 with the view of finding out his opinion on the possible sale of the estates. Drysdale, however, assured the Melbourne Office of Australian Estates that their Lower Burdekin sugar estates could be worked so they made a profit. The crop in 1899 had been ruined by frosts - an unusual occurrence on the Lower Burdekin - so it was impossible to judge how successful his changes may have been in reducing the costs of running the estates.¹³⁹

The London Board of Australian Estates, after considering this report, decided not to sell their Lower Burdekin sugar properties. The Board, however, may have wondered if it was a correct decision, for Kalamia made a further loss in 1900. Nevertheless, their faith in John Drysdale was vindicated in early 1902 when it was revealed their Lower Burdekin properties had made a profit in 1901 - the first since 1894. However, the London Board's pleasure over this achievement was marred by the announcement in late 1901 that the newly elected Commonwealth Government had legislated to prohibit the recruitment of Melanesians to Australia after 1904. This action, as will be seen in the next chapter, once again resulted in Australian Estates considering the sale of their Lower Burdekin sugar properties.

In summary, the attempts by the Lower Burdekin farmers in the mid-1890s to either erect the Jarvisfield Central Mill or turn Kalamia into a central mill ended in failure. This result - attributed to farmer disharmony, Australian Estates' poor judgement and Drysdale Bros.' opposition to the schemes - had two significant repercussions. First, Jarvisfield Central Mill supporters agreed to send their crops exclusively to Pioneer Mill for crushing after 1897. Second, Australian Estates appointed John Drysdale as General Manager of their Lower Burdekin properties in order to make them viable. Both these outcomes benefited Drysdale Bros. The increased sugar-cane supplies meant by the turn of the century they had emerged as the region's premier sugar producer, turning out around seventy per cent of the district's raw sugar (see Table 6.15). In addition, through John Drysdale they had considerable influence over their opposition and controlled all aspects of sugar production, including the prices paid for the crops, operations at both mills and the supply of finance to most farmers. This substantial influence Drysdale

¹³⁹ Details were summarized from "A Report by the Committee to the Board with regard to an Interview with Mr. John Drysdale, 11 September 1900", A.N.U., Archives of Business and Labour, A.E.R., 165/305.

Table 6.15. Sugar Output (in tons) of the Lower Burdekin Mills,
1893-1901

	Kalamia	Seaforth	Pioneer	Total
1893	1250	1317	2093 (37)	5660
1894	2270	2080	4396 (50)	8746
1895	1645	1160	3630 (56)	6435
1896	1866	800	3548 (57)	6250
1897	1900	1414	4951 (60)	8265
1898	2683	2010	7414 (61)	12107
1899	1889	closed	4631 (71)	6520
1900	2059	closed	5388 (72)	7447
1901	3229	closed	7495 (70)	10724

- Notes: (1) The figure in brackets refers to the tons of sugar produced at Pioneer Mill as a percentage of the total amount of sugar produced yearly on the Lower Burdekin.
2. The figures for Kalamia from 1899 onwards were calculated from subtracting Pioneer's output from the region's total.

Source: Constructed from the figures provided in the following sources: E.M. Long, "Report on Kalamia and Seaforth, Lower Burdekin, Qld., 17 January 1898", A.N.U., Archives of Business and Labour, A.E.R., 165/305.
A.N.U., Archives of Business and Labour, A.E.R., Mail Letterbook No. 1, p. 365.
M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book No. 4, p. 135.
Anon., Pioneer Sugar Mills (Pty.) Ltd., 1884-1958, p. 24.
Reports of the Registrar-General on the Returns of Agricultural and Livestock Statistics, 1899-1901, in Q.V.P.

Bros. had over the Lower Burdekin sugar industry by 1900 was, as will be seen in the next chapter, to last for another decade. Its origins lay in the failed attempt by the region's small farmers to erect the Jarvisfield Central Mill in the mid-1890s.

6.7 IRRIGATION IN THE 1890s

Recurrent droughts throughout the 1890s continued to reveal that the climate of the Lower Burdekin was not ideal for sugar-cane cultivation. As such, irrigation was essential to the sugar industry's survival and expansion. Indeed, official statistics for this period indicate that sixty per cent or more of all the acres irrigated in Queensland were located on the Lower Burdekin (see Table 6.16). Unfortunately, the statistics do not provide the number of acres irrigated and cultivated with sugar-cane on the Lower Burdekin in the 1890s. However, it is reasonable to assume that the majority of the acreage irrigated on the Lower Burdekin in the 1890s was under sugar-cane, for it was the dominant crop in the region (see Table 6.14).

By the turn of the century there were thirty irrigators on the Lower Burdekin (see Table 6.16). It is probable that the majority of these irrigators were tenant small farmers, taking advantage of the planters' irrigation facilities¹⁴⁰. Indeed, the largest irrigators on the Lower Burdekin in the 1890s were the planters, who had improved their irrigation systems throughout the decade by the purchase of additional pumps.¹⁴¹

Official interest in irrigation on the Lower Burdekin in the 1890s was mainly confined to acknowledgement in the annual reports of the Department of Agriculture and Stock that there existed large, privately owned irrigation schemes in the district. However, there was a visit to the Lower Burdekin in 1893 by two government engineers, who reported

¹⁴⁰ For reference to tenants using the planters' irrigation facilities in the 1890s see K.M.A., Account Journal, 1894-1897, pp. 91, 105, 180-82, J.C.U., PMR/JA/10JA/3, passim; S.J.T.C., 1, 10 (1892): 214; and Queenslander, 8 June 1901, p. 1108.

¹⁴¹ For a record of pumps and engines purchased by Drysdale Bros. in the 1890s see J.C.U., PMR/IAL/2, pp. 26-32. For details on the improvements to Kalamia and Seaforth's irrigation systems see N.Q.H., 24 December 1892, p. 20; Charles Young, Kalamia, to Henry Young, Cambridge Downs, 18 January 1895, Young Ms., Private Letterbook, p. 89; and "A Report by the Committee to the Board with regard to an Interview with Mr. John Drysdale, 11 September 1900", p. 3; A.N.U., Archives of Business and Labour, A.E.R., 165/305.

**Table 6.16. Irrigation Statistics for the Lower Burdekin,
1892-1901**

	Acres Irrigated on the Lower Burdekin	Acres Irrigated in Queensland	Number of Irrigators on the Lower Burdekin
1892	3047 (79) ¹	3840	-
1893	3020 (57)	5287	-
1894	4262 (73)	5846	-
1895	4975 (77)	6447	-
1896	5078 (79)	6395	-
1897	5165 (77)	6647	-
1898	7402 (77)	9648	-
1899	4825 (76)	6311	25
1900	4726 (67)	6969	28
1901	3896 (60)	6526	30

Notes: (1) The figure in brackets refers to the acres under irrigation on the Lower Burdekin as a percentage of the acres irrigated in Queensland.

(2) The number of irrigators in Queensland was provided only from 1899 onwards.

Source: Assembled and calculated on the basis of figures in the Annual Reports of the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Stock in Q.V.P.

on the possibility of establishing a main irrigation channel from "The Rocks" near Clare towards Ayr. It was anticipated that this channel would then branch into smaller channels which would supply water to Pioneer, Kalamia and Seaforth plantations.¹⁴² However, this scheme never eventuated, although its construction was again called for in 1900 when it was noticed that pumping from the lagoons was causing them to dry up.¹⁴³ This lack of Crown interest in assisting the development of irrigation on the Lower Burdekin occurred, despite a recommendation from the 1889 Royal Commission which suggested that the government take a more active role in promoting irrigation in Queensland. Indeed, Crown support for an irrigation scheme on the Lower Burdekin did not eventuate until the mid-1910s, and then only after extensive local agitation and hardship caused by recurring droughts.

6.8 CONCLUSIONS

In the last chapter it was concluded that the sugar industry which developed on the Lower Burdekin in the 1880s was based on an incipient form of the neoplantation system. It is reasonable to assert that the system did not remain in this embryonic state, but that a fully developed neoplantation system with its technically advanced production methods and larger quantities of cane emerged on the Lower Burdekin during the early part of the 1890s. This system, however, only operated over a limited area on the northern side of the Burdekin River, effectively embracing three operating estates and fifty or so small farmers, and tied to the three surviving mills.

Was it inevitable that the incipient form of the neoplantation system on the Lower Burdekin in the 1880s would become fully developed in the early 1890s? In view of the low sugar prices in the 1890s it is reasonable to argue that it was a certainty the small crops and ill-equipped mills of the Lower Burdekin plantations in the 1880s would not have financially survived the decade if the status quo was maintained. Therefore, was it inevitable that a fully developed neoplantation system would emerge, given that it was a certainty the system operating in the 1880s would alter so the industry could survive? Certainly there was no surviving documentary evidence to suggest that Drysdale Bros., Young, Ehlers & Co. or Australian Estates contemplated anything but a

¹⁴² N.Q.H., 4 October 1893, p. 17; N.Q.H., 10 January 1894, p. 16; N.Q.H., 17 January 1894, p. 17.

¹⁴³ N.Q.H., 6 August 1900, p. 49.

neoplantation system of production in the early 1890s. Indeed, all firms after 1892 implemented a clearly identifiable policy of expansion. It resulted in the upgrading of the mills and irrigation systems and the enlargement of the cane supplies by cultivation of additional land or acceptance of the cane from the region's small farmers. Moreover, since there was no chronic shortage of cheap labour and land, there was no immediate need for the planters to consider sharecropping or subdividing their estates and turning their factories into proprietary central mills.

Possibilities of new arrangements emerging on the Lower Burdekin occurred, however, during the development of the neoplantation system. The small cane farmers endeavoured to erect a co-operatively owned mill, but their mismanagement resulted in the scheme's failure. Also, Australian Estates found operations on its fully developed neoplantations still did not return a profit. Consequently, by 1897 Australian Estates was considering two alternative arrangements: first, it was suggested that Seaforth and Kalamia Mills could be closed and the crops from the plantations crushed at Pioneer Mill, which would become the district's central factory; or second, it was considered that Kalamia could become a central mill supplied by small farmers, including some who would have been located on subdivided Kalamia and Seaforth Estates. One of these arrangements may have developed except for John Drysdale's obvious opposition to both schemes. Instead, Australian Estates appointed John Drysdale as General Manager of their Lower Burdekin properties. Through rationalization (i.e. closure of Seaforth Mill) and careful management he was able to sustain Australian Estates' neoplantations and make them return a profit.

Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that the survival of the neoplantation system on the Lower Burdekin in the late 1890s was dependent on the continued availability of cheap labour and John Drysdale, who used his local knowledge and entrepreneurial skills to defeat the moves that aimed to establish a central mill. However, it was a certainty that the neoplantation system would not remain the industry's mode of production. Although John Drysdale's influence over the evolution of the Lower Burdekin sugar industry was great, in the 1890s he had not been able to defeat the wider socio-political forces (i.e. agrarianism which favoured small-scale farming, trade unionism, White Australia policy) that were to transform the sugar industry on the Lower Burdekin from being based on plantations to one organized around central mills supplied by

family farms worked by 'whites'. Indeed, such forces became paramount in the early 1900s and led to the industry's complete structural reorganization. As such, the neoplantation system that developed fully on the Lower Burdekin in the early 1890s and lasted into the early 1900s, as will be shown in the next chapter, was only transitory. However, it was an important phase, for the emergence of the industry's tightly regulated structure was built upon the extensive control the millers developed over the farmers during the 1890s.

CHAPTER 7

FEDERAL INTERVENTION: 1902-19127.1 INTRODUCTION

At the turn of the century most of the Lower Burdekin sugar crop was grown on plantations; the remainder of it was cultivated on small farms. Both planter and small farmer still relied on indentured Melanesians as their main labour source. However, during the 1900s the sugar industry on the Lower Burdekin underwent a significant transformation. By 1912 the industry was characterized by proprietary central mills supplied by small family farms worked by European labour. The plantations no longer existed and the Melanesians had mostly disappeared from the region's canefields forever. In addition, there had been a substantial expansion in the areal extent of sugar growing on the Lower Burdekin. The causes of these crucial spatial changes will now be considered, beginning with a discussion of the broader economic and political developments which affected Queensland's sugar growers during the 1900s.

7.2 QUEENSLAND'S SUGAR INDUSTRY, 1902-1912: AN OVERVIEW

By 1900 developments in the sugar industry had enabled Queensland to establish a system of farming whereby the small farmers could make satisfactory profits, although it depended on the intensive use of indentured Melanesians who were employed at low wage rates.¹ This practice, however, was attracting considerable criticism by the late 1890s and there was a widespread consensus in the Australian community of the necessity of a White Australia policy and the desirability of stopping the traffic in non-European labour, although the abolitionists conceded the sugar industry might be harmed.²

After federation the newly elected Commonwealth Government, dominated by supporters of the White Australia policy, responded to the community pressures by introducing the Pacific Islanders Labourers Act

¹ Bruce Davidson, European Farming in Australia (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1981), p. 159.

² Bolton, A Thousand Miles Away, p. 249; D. Hunt, "Exclusivism and Unionism: Europeans in the Queensland Sugar Industry" in Who Are Our Enemies?: racism and the Australian working class. Eds. Anne Curthoys and Andrew Markus (Sydney: Hale and Iremonger, 1978), p. 81. See also, R. Norris, The Emergent Commonwealth, pp. 85-91.

of 1901, which prohibited the recruitment and introduction of Melanesians into Australia after 31 March 1904 and allowing for certain exemptions, required the Melanesian community to be repatriated after 1906. To protect the country's sugar industry against the probable adverse economic effects, a protective duty of £6 per ton was placed on all sugar imports. Sugar producers were encouraged to use European or 'white' labour by the award of a £2 per ton rebate to those who used only 'whites' to grow and harvest sugar-cane. The funds for this rebate were raised by the imposition of a £3 per ton excise on all sugar consumed in Australia. The burden of funding the extra wages that the sugar growers would have to pay 'white' labourers was to be shared by the entire community.³

Considerable opposition to the above legislation was expressed by the sugar industry, including the Melanesians who protested against their deportation.⁴ It was argued that the industry would collapse after the removal of the Melanesians. Indeed, such a fear became so widespread amongst growers that the Queensland Government appointed a Royal Commission into the number of Pacific Islanders to be deported from the state at the end of 1906. However, this inquiry concluded there would be sufficient labour in Queensland to carry on the sugar industry after the deportation of the Melanesians, although its supply, particularly in the northern sugar-growing regions, would be enhanced by the establishment of a Labour Intelligence Bureau of co-ordinate information on the availability of workers. With regards to the Melanesians, the Commission recommended that Pacific Islanders unfit for life on their native Islands by reason of age or infirmity, those who had been resident for twenty years in Australia, and those who had been living for twelve months or more with partners with whom they could not return should be exempt from deportation.⁵

Following the release of the findings of the above Royal

³ Hunt, "Exclusivism and Unionism", p. 82; Shlomowitz, "The search for institutional equilibrium in Queensland's sugar industry, 1884-1913", p. 108.

⁴ A. Birch, "The Implementation of the White Australia Policy in the Queensland Sugar Industry 1901-1912", Australian Journal of Politics and History, 11 (1965): 207; Johnston, The Call of the Land, p. 131; Moore, Kanaka, pp. 274-278.

⁵ R.A. Ranking et al., "Report and Evidence of the Royal Commission Appointed to Inquire into and Report Regarding the Number of Pacific Islanders to be Deported from Queensland at the end of 1906", Q.P.P., 2 (1906): 461-464.

Commission, the Queensland Government pressured the Commonwealth Government to relax the strict provisions of the legislation requiring the repatriation of the Melanesian community. The Commonwealth agreed to Queensland's request and legislation was passed in 1906 granting exemption from departure for those categories of Melanesians referred to above. Even with exemptions, however, only 1,600 Melanesians out of just over 9,300 in 1901 remained in Queensland when deportation was officially complete on 31 July 1908.⁶ Australia therefore, unlike Fiji, Trinidad, Mauritius and British Guiana, did not allow a large number of its indentured sugar workers to settle and become small farmers.⁷

The incentives provided by the Commonwealth to growers to use 'white' workers was initially more successful in the southern sugar growing regions, with farmers in North Queensland being slower to abandon their traditional reliance on Melanesians (Table 7.1). Indeed, Hunt concluded that this occurred because some sugar growers did not attempt to phase in 'white' workers at all, preferring to make the most of the available 'Kanakas' before they were deported while other producers replaced Melanesians with Chinese, Indians and Japanese. Consequently, in some districts in North Queensland the number of Melanesians employed in the sugar industry actually reached a peak in 1902 and 1903.⁸ Nevertheless, by 1906 'white' labour was responsible for growing and harvesting seventy per cent of the Queensland sugar crop (see Table 7.1). Four years later less than ten percent of the state's sugar crop was harvested by non-Europeans; a result no doubt of the continued existence of the rebate, which had its time in operation extended from 1 January 1907 to 1 January 1913.⁹

The Commonwealth's rebate on 'white' grown cane stimulated production, for farmers extended their area under cane so as to collect a

⁶ Fitzgerald, *From the Dreaming to 1915*, p. 188. For details on the repatriation of Melanesians after 1906 see Bolton, *A Thousand Miles Away*, p. 251; Peter Corris, "White Australia in Action: the repatriation of Pacific Islanders from Queensland", *Historical Studies*, 15 (1972): 237-50; Moore, *Kanaka*, pp. 287-291.

⁷ Adamson, *Sugar Without Slaves*, pp. 96-97; Brereton, *Race Relations in Colonial Trinidad, 1870-1900*, pp. 142; Huttenback, *Racism and Empire*, p. 34; Moynagh, *Brown or White?*, p. 69; Tinker, *A New System of Slavery*, pp. 81-82.

⁸ Hunt, "Exclusivism and Unionism", pp. 87-88.

⁹ Hunt, "Exclusivism and Unionism", p. 92; R. Norris, *The Emergent Commonwealth*, p. 86.

Table 7.1. The Percentage of Sugar-Cane Acreage Grown and Harvested by 'White' Labour by Queensland Region, 1902-1906

Region	1902	1903	1904	1905	1906
Cairns/Mossman	5	8	4.2	5	42.5
Ingham/Mourilyan	3.4	12	11	11	51.7
Burdekin	*	14	20	16	53.7
Proserpine	57	67	69.2	72	86.4
Mackay	3.9	47	47.1	49	75.4
Bundaberg	25.9	17	32.3	40	80.5
Childers/Maryborough	18.2	40.5	45.3	51	82.4
Maroochy	80	86	87	88	87
Brisbane	*	*	82.3	88	100
Logan/Nerang	94	80	94.3	97	100
Queensland Total	15.4	25.7	28.6	35.4	69.3

* No figures provided.

Source: Calculated from figures provided in the Annual Reports of the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Stock, 1902-1906, in Q.P.P.

greater rebate. Consequently, there was an expansion in the area under cane in Queensland during the early 1900s (see Table 7.2). Such an expansion was also aided by the world wide improvement in sugar prices that followed the abolition of the European beet sugar bounty system by the Brussels Convention of 1902.¹⁰ Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier there was a fear amongst some growers that they and the industry would face ruin following the removal of Melanesian workers.¹¹ Such concerns were ill-founded, although from 1907 to 1909 the area under cane in Queensland was less than the acreage cultivated in 1906 (see Table 7.2).

Confidence in sugar growing in Queensland was restored by the early 1910s, after it was demonstrated that 'white' labour could and would work successfully in the canefields. Consequently by 1912 over 140,000 acres were under cane in Queensland. This was higher than the level reached in 1906, before the Melanesians were deported. Much of this increase in the late 1900s was attributable to the expansion in the area under cane in the northern districts, particularly in the Mackay and Lower Burdekin regions (see Table 7.2).

Besides encouraging farmers to hire only 'whites' and plant more cane, the Federal Government's rebate in conjunction with its decision to end the trade in Melanesians brought about the demise of most of the remaining plantations that still operated in Queensland in the early 1900s.¹² This occurred because the majority of the state's last planters believed it was economically impossible to work their estates using only 'whites'. Accordingly, these remaining plantations were subdivided and the lands rented or sold to small farmers.¹³ Nevertheless, three plantations still operated in 1912: Fairymead and Bingera at Bundaberg

¹⁰ P. Courtenay, Northern Australia: patterns and problems of tropical development in an advanced country (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1982), p. 29.

¹¹ N.Q.R., 31 October 1904, p. 51.

¹² For reference to the existence of Queensland's sugar plantations in the early 1900s see R.A. Ranking et al., "Report and Evidence of the Royal Commission Appointed to Inquire into and Report Regarding the Number of Pacific Islanders to be Deported from Queensland at the end of 1906", Q.P.P., 2 (1906): 608, 611, 613.

¹³ For reference to plantation subdivision in the mid-1900s see 'Extract from the Annual Report of Mr. A.P. Cameron, Land Commissioner for the Cairns, Cooktown, Atherton, Herberton, Ingham/Mourilyan and Port Douglas Land Agents' Districts, 1906', Q.P.P., 2 (1907): 560; 'Extract from the Annual Report of Mr. B.C. Macgroarty, Acting Land Commissioner for the Mackay Land Agent's District', Q.P.P., 2 (1908): 1018; and Manning, In their own hands, p. 170.

Table 7.2. Distribution of Sugar Cane Acreage in Queensland, 1902-1912

	1902	1903	1904	1905	1906	1907	1908	1909	1910	1911	1912
Cairns/Mossman	13663	17141	17028	19695	18017	16301	14571	15371	18261	12985	15634
Herbert/Mourilyan	18925	20171	19544	23197	21265	17991	18267	19617	21984	20769	22948
Lower Burdekin	4344	5481	6227	6583	7289	7974	8161	9650	10976	10759	12591
Proserpine	2701	3047	3271	3302	3421	3925	3934	3898	4366	3370	3463
Mackay	22379	23473	28182	30328	31472	30386	30483	34203	37142	33637	36834
Bundaberg	12847	21926	23308	26364	26505	24887	25382	22782	19151	26344	26510
Childers/ Maryborough	8770	15207	16632	17518	17802	17553	16517	17333	24764	18422	19221
Maroochy	965	2295	2866	3299	3277	3345	3035	2546	2216	1802	1970
Brisbane/Logan	744	2775	3259	3821	4236	4448	3552	2778	2919	2288	2481
TOTAL	85338	111516	120317	134107	133284	126810	123902	128178	141779	130376	141652

Source: Assembled on the basis of the figures in the Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture and Stock in Q.P.P., 1903-1913.

and Greenhill, a Chinese worked estate near Cairns.¹⁴

Associated with the demise of the state's last plantations was a continued increase in the number of small cane farmers. As mentioned previously, Walter Maxwell found there to be 2,610 cane farmers in Queensland in 1899. By 1911 it was recorded there were 4,328 small producers of sugar-cane in Queensland.¹⁵ In contrast to the general increase in small cane farmers in the 1900s, there was a rapid decline in the number of Chinese growers in the Cairns region after 1906, for they were not eligible for the rebate and the district's mills began to actively discriminate against them.¹⁶

The transformation of Queensland's sugar industry during the 1900s, although happening without any significant interruption to production, did not occur without some industrial conflict. The influx of 'white' labourers to replace the departing Melanesians required a change of attitude on the part of farmers and mill owners, for they were no longer dealing with indentured workers, but Europeans who demanded better working conditions and higher wages. The Queensland Government led the way in meeting these demands by introducing the Sugar and Shearers' Accommodation Act of 1905, which prescribed minimum standards of food and accommodation for Europeans employed in both the mills and cane fields and provided for inspectors to ensure that the regulations were implemented and the gazetted standards maintained. In addition, the Federal Government in 1907 fixed a minimum field labourer's wage of 22s. 6d. per week as a condition for the payment of the bounty to the farmers.¹⁷ However, despite the introduction of these measures, Hunt concluded that the conditions for 'white' workers in Queensland's sugar industry remained poor. Accommodation was still execrable and wages - except for contract cane cutters working long hours - were considerably lower than those in other industries.¹⁸ Consequently, after 1905 there was an increase in unionism amongst sugar workers which resulted in industrial disputes and stoppages, as efforts were made to improve

¹⁴ May, Topsawyers, p. 46; Nolan, Bundaberg: History and People, p. 116.

¹⁵ Q.P.P., 3 (1912): 318.

¹⁶ May, Topsawyers, p. 45.

¹⁷ Hunt, "Exclusivism and Unionism", p. 91.

¹⁸ Hunt, "Exclusivism and Unionism", p. 93.

working conditions.¹⁹ This campaign to improve working conditions in the Queensland sugar industry culminated in the 1911 sugar strike.

The main protagonists in the 1911 strike were the Amalgamated Sugar Workers' Union, the C.S.R. Co. and the Australian Sugar Producers Association (A.S.P.A.), which represented the growers and millers.²⁰ The strike originated on the Lower Burdekin in May 1911, for the district's farmer organization refused to agree to the union demands of an eight hour day and a minimum wage of 30s. a week.²¹ It soon spread to other regions as local farmer organizations, with the support of the A.S.P.A., refused union demands for higher wages and a shorter working day.²²

Initially, the farmers harvested their own cane and manned the mills so the season's crushing could proceed. 'Free' labourers were also recruited to staff the mills. However, such action did little to end the strike which entered its third month at the beginning of August 1911. By then disillusionment with the employers' stand had become widespread. Indeed, hostility to the C.S.R. Co. and the A.S.P.A. had led to farmers establishing rebel local growers' unions, which began to publicly support the strike.²³

In the face of mounting opposition, the C.S.R. Co. and the A.S.P.A. used an organization called the Free Workers Union to place a case before the Mackay Wages Board in early August. The Free Workers Union asked for terms that were essentially requested by the strikers, except they applied only to mill workers. On the 10th of August the Mackay Wages Board agreed to the Free Workers Union's request and after some negotiations between the union leaders, the C.S.R. Co. and the A.S.P.A. the strike was officially ended on the 14th of August.²⁴

¹⁹ Hunt, "Exclusivism and Unionism", p. 93.

²⁰ Formed in Townsville in 1907, the A.S.P.A. promoted the interest of millowners and growers. For its early history see D. Watson, "The Australian sugar story, 1907-1982: achievements of the A.S.P.A.", J. of R.H.S.Q., 7, 3 (1981-82): 88-106.

²¹ N.Q.R., 27 May 1911, p. 45; N.Q.R., 5 June 1911, p. 78.

²² N.Q.R., 19 June 1911, pp. 29, 50, 83.

²³ John Armstrong, "The Sugar Strike, 1911" in The Big Strikes, Queensland 1889-1965 ed. D.J. Murphy (Brisbane: Uni. of Queensland Press, 1983), p. 110.

²⁴ Armstrong, "The Sugar Strike, 1911", p. 112.

The 1911 sugar strike achieved an increase in wages for mill workers, but field labourers, many of whom supported the strike, now received lower wages. However, on the 2nd of August 1912 the Federal Minister of Trades and Customs issued a notice stating that field workers were to be paid 36 s. for a 48 hour week with keep for all classes as opposed to 22s. 6d. and 25s. per week respectively for fifty-eight and sixty hours in the slack and harvest season.²⁵ Farmers throughout Queensland protested against this action, claiming that no provision had been made for the growers to meet the increased wage claims.²⁶ The Minister's decision was implemented in October, however, when the Sugar Bounty Act of 1912 was passed in Federal Parliament. Following the introduction of this legislation, any growers wishing to claim the bounty on 'white' grown sugar-cane had to indicate on his claim the conditions of employment and the rates of wages paid to any labourers. If the required conditions and wages were not met, the bounty would be withheld.

The impact of the 1911 sugar strike went beyond just achieving an increase in wages for workers in the sugar industry. The publicity given to the state of the industry during the strike revealed the need for reforms, so that farmer, worker and miller received a fairer share of the industry's profits.²⁷ Consequently, the Commonwealth Government appointed a Royal Commission to investigate the industry.²⁸ This inquiry found that the bounty regulations had successfully promoted the 'white' labour policy and improved wages, but that the progress of events had diminished the value of the bounty and excise system. The transformation in the field from coloured to 'white' labour was virtually complete. The bounty system in conjunction with the excise duty had been a source of revenue to the Commonwealth, but the Commission was unable to see any justification for a tax on the sugar industry. In addition, the bounty regulations were partial in their operation, applying only to growers, leaving the mill employees and refiners, unprotected.

In order to eliminate the excise and bounty regulations, the

²⁵ N.Q.R., 12 August 1912, p. 26.

²⁶ N.Q.R., 19 August 1912, p. 74.

²⁷ Armstrong, "The Sugar Strike, 1911", p. 112.

²⁸ For a detailed examination of the 1912 Royal Commission see D. Shogren, "The Politics and Administration of the Queensland Sugar Industry to 1930", Ph.D. thesis, Uni. of Queensland, 1980, pp. 160-195.

Commissioners recommended the most preferable method would be the direct prohibition by legislation of the employment of coloured labour in the canefields. The Queensland Premier had already advised the Commonwealth Government that if the Excise and Bounty Acts were repealed he would introduce legislation for the exclusion of coloured labour.²⁹ Consequently, the Commonwealth agreed to Queensland's proposition and in early 1913 the Federal Government returned control of the affairs of the sugar industry to Queensland. The manner in which this was achieved, however, will be reviewed in the following chapter.

Against this background of Commonwealth intervention in the development of the Queensland sugar industry, it is now possible to examine how the Lower Burdekin planters and small sugar growers responded to Federal regulation. This discussion, however, will begin with a review of the land openings that occurred in the district between 1900 and 1912. In contrast to the previous twenty years, estate subdivisions and private land sales were to be particularly important during the 1900s in ensuring closer settlement throughout the district.

7.3 CLOSER SETTLEMENT ON THE LOWER BURDEKIN, 1902-1912

7.3.1 Introduction

At the turn of the century the cornerstone of Queensland's land legislation was the Crown Lands Act of 1897. The basis to this legislation was that sections of pastoral runs considered suitable for agriculture were resumed for purposes of closer settlement. This principle was maintained during the 1900s, although the Crown Lands Act of 1897 was amended in 1902, 1905, 1908 and 1909. The most significant amendments were as follows: provision for the conversion of agricultural farms into grazing farms and agricultural homesteads into either agricultural farms or unconditional selections; relief when rents were in arrears; more liberal residential clauses; inducements to destroy prickly-pear and erect rabbit proof fencing; and the introduction of the perpetual lease selection; a new class of selection similar to the agricultural farm, but where the lessee had not the right of converting

²⁹ Summarized from details in Harry Easterby, The Queensland Sugar Industry: an historical review (Brisbane: Government Printer, 1932), pp. 33-34.

his leasehold into freehold.³⁰

Accompanying the changes listed above were amendments to the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act of 1894. Although not mentioned in the previous chapter, this legislation enabled the government to purchase estates submitted for surrender and to subdivide them into agricultural farms for selection. Changes to the legislation in 1901 and 1905 provided for an extension to the period during which the settler paid the Crown for the land and ensured that priority was given to settlers who offered five year's personal residence on their blocks.³¹

The Agricultural Lands Purchase Acts, 1894 to 1905 were eventually repealed by The Closer Settlement Act of 1906. This new legislation, although having similarities with its predecessors, was markedly different in two respects: first, the power of compulsory purchase was conferred on the government; and second, the amount which could be expended annually in the acquisition of estates was increased. Therefore, under The Closer Settlement Act of 1906, the Minister, instead of waiting for an offer to surrender as was formerly necessary, could now take the initiative and inform the Land Court that, in his opinion, it was desirable that the whole or part of any private land should be acquired for closer settlement.³²

As seen above, the main thrust of Queensland's land legislation in the 1900s was to place as many people on the land in the state as official action could accomplish. Naturally claims Stephens, such a legislative program coupled with good seasons and an active railway policy led to closer settlement "with a rapidity hitherto explained".³³ Of particular note was the successful closer settlement of the Burnett and

³⁰ Summarized from details of the legislation found in Q.G.G., 79 (1902): 1430-1454; Q.G.G., 85 (1905): 1427-1450; Q.G.G., 90 (1908): 1102-1111; W.J. Scott, "Annual Report of the Department of Public Lands, 1909", Q.P.P., 3 (1910): 18; Stephens, History of Australian Land Settlement, p. 307; and Bernays, Queensland Politics During Sixty Years, pp. 332-335.

³¹ For details on this legislation see Jack Camm, "Land Settlement and the Development of Farming Under the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act of 1894 and Closer Settlement Acts 1906-1917", Queensland Heritage, 1 (1968): 25-31 and Reeves, State Experiments in Australia and New Zealand, pp. 289-291.

³² W.J. Scott, "Annual Report of the Department of Public Lands, 1906", Q.P.P., 2 (1907): 491.

³³ Stephens, History of Australian Land Settlement, p. 307.

Atherton Tablelands regions, where a combination of the arrival of a railway and land openings saw agriculture replace timber as the major industry in the former district while in the latter dairying became particularly important.³⁴ Despite these successes, Bernays considered that by 1909 the Queensland land laws could well be described as chaotic, and that the series of amendments superimposed upon amendments had led to confusion.³⁵

The end to Queensland's complicated land legislation was achieved by the introduction of the Land Act of 1910, which comprised 211 sections. The new legislation made uniform the general terms and conditions of each form of tenure and ensured they were applied equally to existing and future tenancies. Existing tenancies were continued, but made subject to its provisions, modifying existing rights and liabilities in some particulars, but not to any greater extent than was found absolutely necessary to make them conform to the attainment of one enactment controlling the leasing, selection and sale of Crown lands. In addition, the 1910 legislation continued to allow the conversion of selection tenures from any one mode to any other mode, but with the Minister's consent and on terms approved by the Land Court. The Land Act of 1910 also made special provision for groups and "landless men" and allowed larger areas to be selected as agricultural farms, although the legislation continued to insist on the need for personal residence on the land selected.³⁶ In praising the Land Act of 1910, Stephens concluded that it was:

an elastic measure which bound the Minister and the Land Court by no rigid limits and which truly opened "a vision of settlement". Occupation increased and, in particular, dairy farming encroached further and further towards the central tableland.³⁷

Within the legislative framework described above, the Crown land openings that occurred on the Lower Burdekin between 1902 and 1912 will now be considered. In addition, a further section will deal with the freehold estates subdivided on the Lower Burdekin in the 1900s.

³⁴ Bolton, A Thousand Miles Away, pp. 300-301; Fitzgerald, From the Dreaming to 1915, p. 195.

³⁵ Bernays, Queensland Politics During Sixty Years, p. 335.

³⁶ Summarized from details in W.J. Scott, "Annual Report of the Department of Public Lands, 1910", Q.P.P., 2 (1911): 673-676.

³⁷ Stephens, History of Australian Land Settlement, pp. 307-308.

7.3.2 Crown Land Openings, 1902-1910

By the turn of the century most of the Crown land on the Lower Burdekin had been sold to selectors. The majority of the remaining Crown land was held by pastoralists as occupation licenses or contained in reserves. The Queensland Government during the 1900s, however, slowly resumed the most suitable parts of the last occupation licenses for the purposes of closer settlement. Several reserves were also opened to selection. These openings are summarized in Table 7.3 and Figure 7.1.

Interest in selecting Crown land resumed from the last of the occupation licenses on the Lower Burdekin varied during the 1900s. The government was able to sell parts of O.L. 72, O.L. 74, O.L. 89, O.L. 108 and O.L. 110 in under five years. Much of this land, purchased as grazing farms, had some frontage to the Haughton River, so no doubt it was seen as worth securing. In contrast, the Queensland Government had less immediate success in interesting settlers in the agricultural farms opened for sale on Rita Island, despite the agricultural potential of most of the land. As shown in Table 7.3, the Crown was required to withdraw from sale the unpurchased blocks on Rita Island in 1905 and 1907. It was only in 1910 that the government was finally able to dispose the last of the blocks in that locality. Similarly, the country comprising O.L. 108 was not initially viewed by settlers or graziers as worthy of selection. However, by 1910 all of the land that formerly comprised the Woodhouse Resumption had been chosen as grazing farms.

By far the most unsuccessful resumption from an occupation license and subsequent land sale that occurred on the Lower Burdekin during the 1900s involved O.L. 71 and O.L. 91. Following the expiration of the leases over this country in early 1906, the local member, Frank Kenna, wrote several letters to the Minister for Lands requesting that this country be subdivided.³⁸ Local newspapers also called for the subdivision of the former occupation licenses for the purposes of closer settlement.³⁹ After inspecting the country, Government officials reported that it was not suitable for subdivision into smaller agricultural farms owing to a scarcity of water and the barrier of the Burdekin River which precluded

³⁸ See Q.S.A., LAN/AE 672/L.055, In-letters 12099 and 14924 of 1906 and an unnumbered In-letter dated 23 April 1906.

³⁹ N.Q.H., 26 March 1906; P.D.T., 27 March 1906; and P.D.T., 12 June 1906.

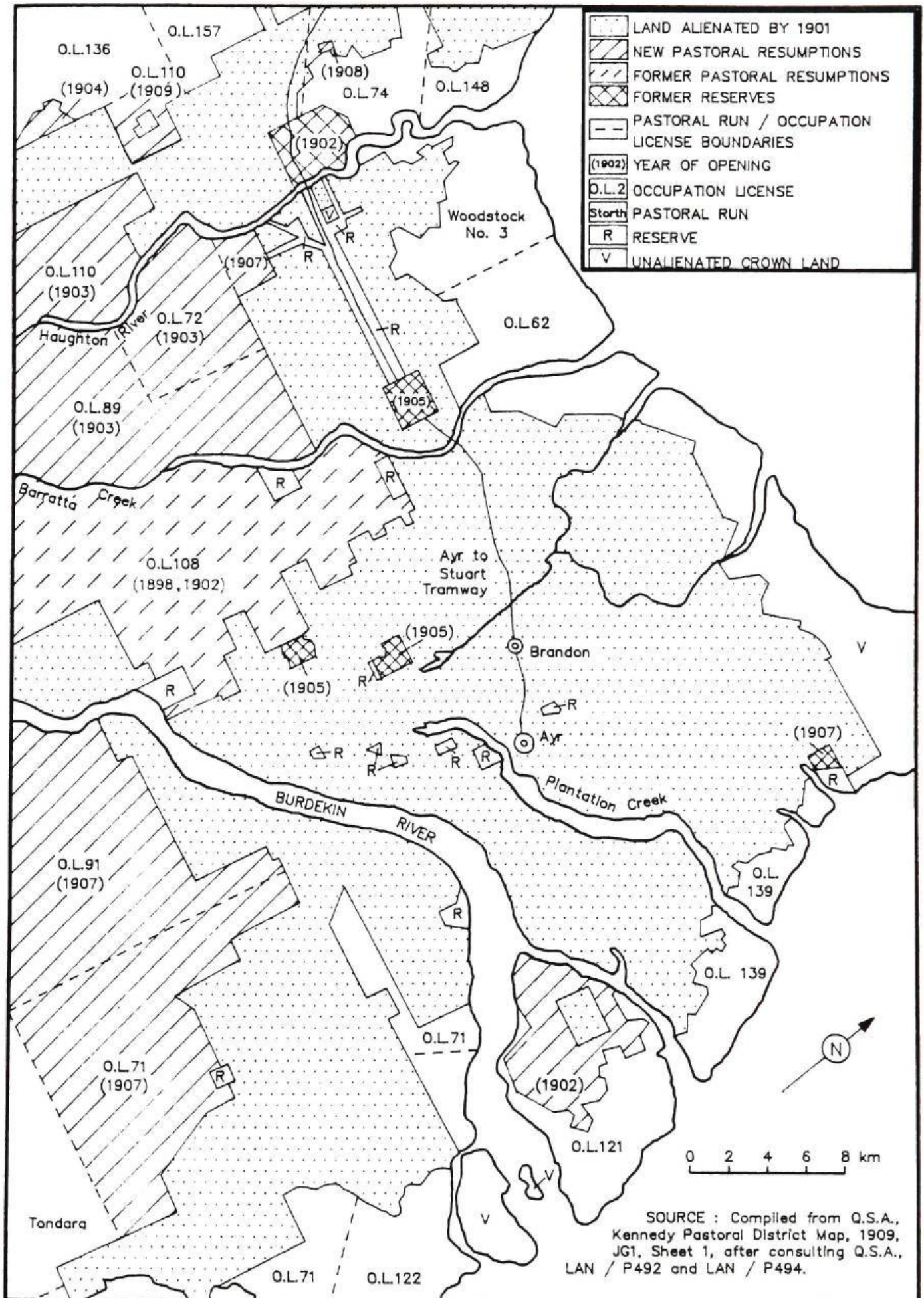


Figure 7.1 Categories of Crown Land Opened to Selection on the Lower Burdekin, 1902 – 1910

Table 7.3. Crown Land Openings on the Lower Burdekin, 1902-1910

Occupation Licenses	Year of Opening	Size (acres) and Type of Opening	Comments	Reference to Openings
O.L.71	1907	26,546; 51,A.F.	Minimal interest. Land withdrawn from sale.	<u>Q.C.G.</u> , 88 (1907): 1477
	1908	25,104;42,A.F.	Nine blocks totalling 3,086 acres selected before land withdrawn from sale in late 1909	<u>Q.C.G.</u> , 91 (1908): 1176
O.L.72	1903	9,741; 1,G.F.;3,A.F.	All blocks selected by 1905	<u>Q.C.G.</u> , 81 (1903): 377,378,380
	1907	822; 4, A.F.	All blocks selected by 1910	<u>Q.C.G.</u> , 88 (1907): 1662.
O.L.74	1908	100; 1, A.F.	The block was selected in 1908	<u>Q.C.G.</u> , 91 (1908): 667
O.L. 89	1903	23,204; 2,G.F.	Both blocks selected by 1905	<u>Q.C.G.</u> , 81 (1903): 377
O.L. 91	1907	49,950; 84,A.F.	Minimal interest. Land withdrawn from sale.	<u>Q.C.G.</u> , 88 (1907): 1476-1477
	1908	49,510; 83,A.F.	Seven blocks totalling 1,905 acres selected before land withdrawn from sale in late 1909	<u>Q.C.G.</u> , 91 (1908): 1176
O.L.108	1898	30,140; 6,G.F.	Blocks selected between 1902-1906	<u>Q.C.G.</u> , 69 (1898): 822,865,1223; <u>Q.C.G.</u> , 70 (1898): 1175, 1177
	1902	1,212;2,G.F.; 160,A.F.	Blocks selected by 1905	<u>Q.C.G.</u> , 78 (1902): 1568; <u>Q.C.G.</u> , 79 (1902): 315
O.L. 110	1903	7,916; 4,A.F.; 1,G.F.	Blocks not selected until 1907-1908	<u>Q.C.G.</u> , 81 (1903): 377,378,380
	1909	2,110; 4,A.F.	All blocks selected by 1912	<u>Q.C.G.</u> , 93 (1909): 358
O.L. 121	1902	4,728 ; 56,A.F.&U.S.	Thirteen blocks totalling 1,787 acres selected before land withdrawn from sale in 1905	<u>Q.C.G.</u> , 79 (1902): 556
	1904	2,827 ; 1,G.F.;	Three blocks totalling 2,127 acres selected before land withdrawn from sale in 1905	<u>Q.C.G.</u> , 83 (1904): 675-676
	1907	924; 11, A.F.&U.S.	No interest in the blocks	<u>Q.C.G.</u> , 88 (1907): 1627
	1910	2,313 ; 26,A.F.&U.S.	All blocks selected by 1912	<u>Q.C.G.</u> , 94 (1910): 654.
O.L. 136	1903	1,618 ; 1A.F.	The block was selected in 1904	<u>Q.C.G.</u> , 81 (1903): 378
<u>Reserves</u>				
Western Bank of the Haughton R.	1902	2,207 ; 13,A.F.or U.S.	Eleven blocks selected by Dec. 1902. Remaining two not occupied until 1907	<u>Q.C.G.</u> , 79 (1902): 315
Barratta Ck	1905	871; 1,G.F.	The block was selected in 1905	<u>Q.C.G.</u> , 85 (1905): 983
Labatt Lagoon	1906	538; 3,A.F.	All blocks selected in 1906	<u>Q.C.G.</u> , 87 (1906): 206
Alva Ck	1907	300; 1,A.F.	The block was selected in 1907	<u>Q.C.G.</u> , 89 (1907): 454

Notes: (1) A.F. - agricultural farms; G.F. - grazing farms; U.S. - unconditional selections

(2) Details on when the blocks were selected were obtained from Q.S.A., LAN/P492 and LAN/P494.

the sending of produce to Ayr profitably.⁴⁰ Despite this recommendation, the Crown subdivided forty-one square miles of O.L. 71 and 78 square miles of O.L. 91 into agricultural farms ranging from 100 acres to 1,300 acres in size and declared them available for selection in July 1907. Interest in the land was so poor that only a few blocks totalling less than 2,000 acres were chosen. Consequently, in September 1907 the Crown withdrew the country from selection. However, all the land was again thrown open to selection in December 1908. Some further blocks comprising 4,500 acres in total were selected, but in November 1909 the Crown once again withdrew from selection the unchosen agricultural farms on what was formerly O.L. 71 and O.L. 91. Despite two attempts at trying to dispose of this country, over 108 square miles remained unselected in 1909. Eventually, however, the land was secured as grazing farms during the Inkerman Estate openings in the early 1910s. Consideration will now be given to that series of openings.

7.3.3 The Inkerman Estate, 1910-1915

Between 1911 and 1913 a collection of large freehold blocks on the southern side of the Burdekin River and on the western bank of the Haughton River were opened to closer settlement. Called the Inkerman Estate, this land was the property of the N.A.P.C. As mentioned earlier, the N.A.P.C. between 1878 and 1884 acquired several thousand acres of land on the Lower Burdekin. Members of the N.A.P.C. in the early 1880s noted they had purchased land suitable for sugar cultivation,⁴¹ but the Company made no attempt to dispose of any of its substantial Lower Burdekin holdings to sugar planters. Indeed, after the sudden decline in the world sugar prices in 1884, the N.A.P.C. turned to acquiring more land on the Lower Burdekin, instead of contemplating selling parts of its holdings. Between 1885 and 1895 the N.A.P.C. acquired a further twenty-one blocks totalling 24,499 acres on the Lower Burdekin (see Figure 7.2). Most of this land, situated on the southern side of the Burdekin River, was purchased from other settlers. Even though it was not possible to

⁴⁰ Arthur Wade, Assessing Commissioner, Townsville, "Report on proposed subdivision of Inkerman Lease for Closer Settlement, 3 May 1906" and H.C. Quodling, Agricultural Inspector, "Report on the Inkerman Lease, 19 June 1906". Both are found in Q.S.A., LAN/AE 672/L.O. 55.

⁴¹ William Forrest to Sir Thomas McIlwraith, 29 September 1881, J.O.L., Palmer-McIlwraith Papers, OM64/19, Box 1, Letter 298; William Collins to Sir Thomas McIlwraith, 31 May 1882, J.O.L. Palmer-McIlwraith Papers, OM64/19, Box 1, Letter 415; William Forrest to Sir Thomas McIlwraith, 8 September 1883, J.O.L., Palmer-McIlwraith Papers, OM64/19, Box 2, Letter 616.

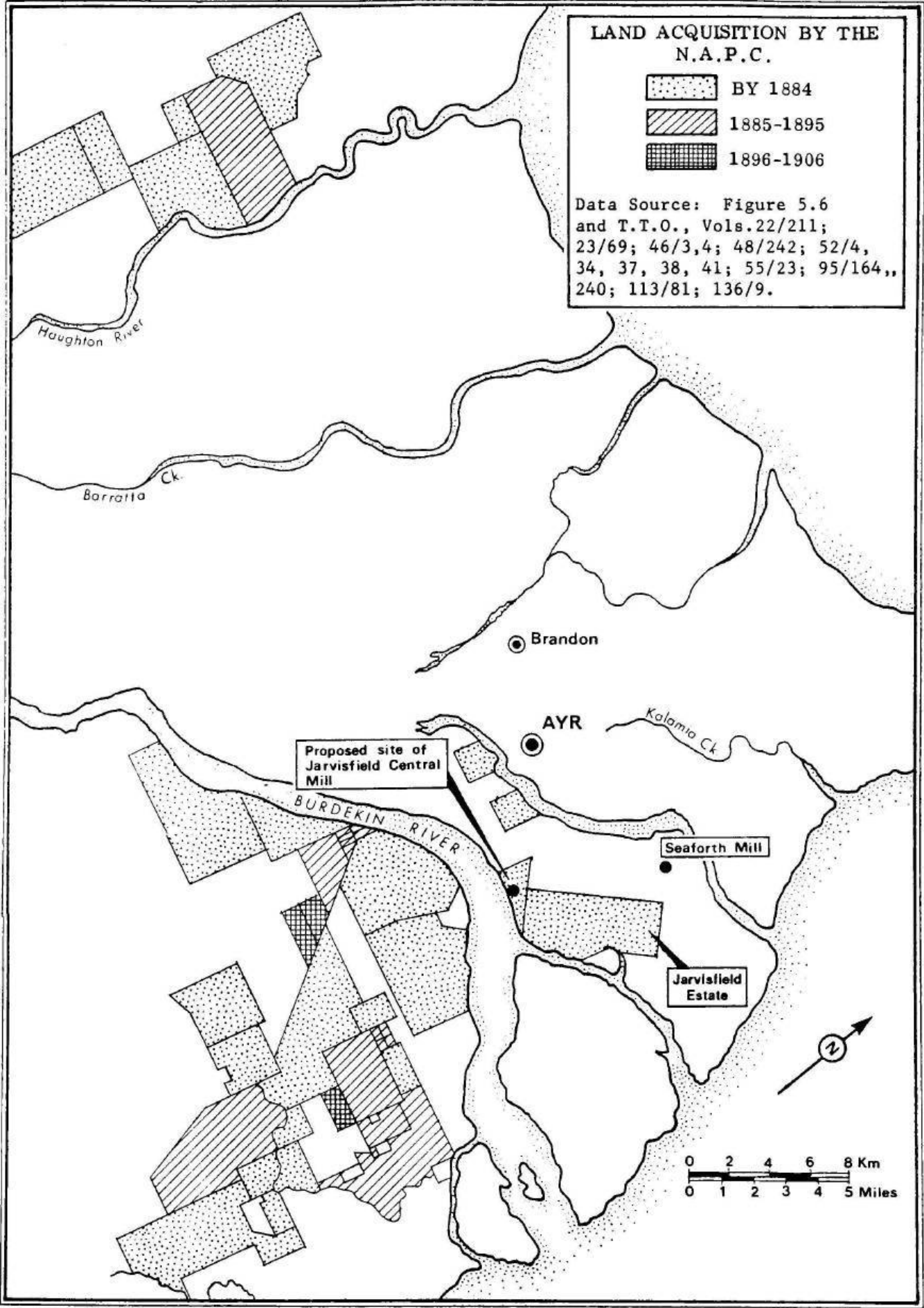


Figure 7.2 Land Purchases by the N.A.P.C. on the Lower Burdekin, 1884-1906.

locate any documentary evidence to explain this policy, it is reasonable to assume the N.A.P.C. undertook further land purchases to consolidate its fragmented holdings and to expand its freehold land in the district so as to combat against further pastoral resumptions.

After a decade of acquiring new country, the N.A.P.C. in 1895 offered to sell Jarvisfield Estate to the Crown under the conditions of Agricultural Lands Purchase Act of 1894. After inspecting Jarvisfield Estate - a 5,600 acre block on the northern side of the Burdekin River - members of the Land Board decided it was ideally suited to sugar cultivation, especially because of its close proximity to Seaforth Mill. However, the Land Board decided not to purchase Jarvisfield Estate, because as its members noted, the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act of 1894 was designed to provide land for a class of settler who had a small amount of capital, but it was unlikely such persons could successfully farm on Jarvisfield Estate due to the need to establish costly irrigation facilities.⁴²

After this unsuccessful attempt to sell part of their lands to the Crown, over a decade passed before the N.A.P.C. again tried to interest the Crown in its large Lower Burdekin holdings, expanded by further small purchases in the early 1900s (see Figure 7.2). In 1906 William Forrest, representing the N.A.P.C., and a deputation of North Queensland parliamentarians waited upon the Minister for Lands in Brisbane to discuss the possibility of the Crown acquiring all the freehold lands of the N.A.P.C. on the Lower Burdekin under the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act of 1894 to 1905.⁴³ William Forrest told the Minister for Lands that his Company was offering in all about 80,000 acres (125 square miles) of land for re-purchase at £1 per acre. Of the holdings offered for re-purchase, 30,000 acres (46.8 square miles) were situated on the western side of the Haughton River while the remaining 50,000 acres (78.1 square miles) were located on the southern side of the Burdekin River as far south as Wangaratta Creek. The Minister replied that a report would be made on the matter at once with a view to purchase. This idea was supported by the Townsville and Ayr Chambers of Commerce and the Lower Burdekin Farmers' Association, who all sent letters to the Minister

⁴² W. Alcock-Tully and T.S. Sword, "Report by the Land Board in Terms of Section 4 of the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act of 1894 on the Jarvisfield Estate on the Burdekin Delta, 7 September 1895", Q.S.A., LAN/AT7: File 70.

⁴³ P.D.T., 10 November 1906.

calling upon the Crown to purchase the land for the purposes of closer settlement.⁴⁴

In February 1907 the Land Court was informed that the Minister believed that it was desirable to acquire all of the Lower Burdekin holdings of the N.A.P.C. with the view to subdivision for closer settlement. Consequently, a member of the Land Court inspected the land and in November 1907 reported to the Minister that a very large part of the country offered for re-purchase was well suited for sugar growing, mixed farming and dairying and there were large quantities of good grazing land. However, it was noted there was no tramline or railway communication with the northern side of the Burdekin River. This was a distinct disadvantage for it would be difficult and expensive to transport cane or milk such distances by horse and wagon. Also, the two sugar mills in the district were reported to be working to their fullest capacity, so there was little likelihood of any new sugar growers on the southern side of the Burdekin River being able to get their crops treated.⁴⁵

After considering the above report and no doubt taking into account the limited interest shown in the agricultural farms opened to selection on O.L. 71 and O.L. 91 in May 1907, the Crown decided not to purchase the N.A.P.C.'s land holdings on the Lower Burdekin. Furthermore, the government advised John Forrest that it would take no further action to acquire the Inkerman lands pending the settlement of its railway policy.⁴⁶

While the Queensland Government assessed its railway policy, the N.A.P.C., encouraged no doubt by the recent success in disposing of their other blocks in the Macdesme locality (see Chapter 7.3.4 for a full discussion), subdivided the southern section of the Jarvisfield Estate in 1909. However, according to Connolly the N.A.P.C., using a nominee, purchased several of the subdivisions themselves so as to dominate the

⁴⁴ N.Q.H., 24 December 1906, p. 5.

⁴⁵ Francis Heeney, "Report to the Honourable the Secretary for Public Lands on the Inkerman and Woodstock Freeholds Situated in the Townsville Land Agent's District, which it is considered desirable to acquire for the purposes of closer settlement under the provisions of The Closer Settlement Act of 1906, 13 November 1907". Reproduced in W.J. Scott, "Report by the Under Secretary for Public Lands under The Closer Settlement Act of 1906 on the Inkerman Estate", Q.P.P., 2 (1911-1912): 742.

⁴⁶ W.J. Scott, Under Secretary, Public Lands, to John Forrest, Brisbane, 15 May 1911, Q.S.A., LAN/AE674/L.O. 81, unnumbered letter.

approach to the site of the proposed Jarvisfield Central Mill.⁴⁷ This claim could not be verified or refuted, but if it was correct the N.A.P.C.'s plans were squashed in early 1910 when the Kidston Government informed the Lower Burdekin supporters of the Jarvisfield Central Mill Scheme that no further central mills would be built in Queensland for the time being.⁴⁸

The Government's decision not to erect a central mill at Jarvisfield once again diminished the possibility that the N.A.P.C. could interest the Crown in purchasing its extensive Lower Burdekin holdings, given that there was little likelihood of new sugar growers on the southern side of the Burdekin River getting their cane crushed at the existing mills in the district. Consequently, John Forrest began negotiations with John Drysdale about the possibility of Drysdale Bros. erecting a mill on the southern side of the Burdekin River. An agreement was reached in July 1910 in which the N.A.P.C. offered Drysdale Bros. a free grant of 500 acres with river frontage on the southern side of the Burdekin River with an option to purchase a further 780 acres at £5 per acre in return for Drysdale Bros. guarantee to build a mill on this land, subject to satisfactory railway accommodation to the mill being undertaken by the Ayr Joint Tramway Board or the Government.⁴⁹

Just under a month later the N.A.P.C. offered the Crown its second chance to acquire its Lower Burdekin property. Unlike previous occasions, the Queensland Government now considered it desirable to acquire the N.A.P.C.'s Inkerman lands. The Crown's change of attitude undoubtedly was a result of the land now being attractive to prospective settlers because of Drysdale Bros.' decision to erect a sugar mill on the southern side of the Burdekin River. In addition, the success of several estate subdivisions in the region during the late 1900s probably convinced the Crown that there was now a strong demand for land on the Lower Burdekin. Consequently, the government agreed to purchase the N.A.P.C.'s land holdings on the Lower Burdekin at £1.10s. per acre. The N.A.P.C. agreed to this offer and in early September 1910 the government acquired the 80,087 acres (125 square miles) belonging to the N.A.P.C. on

⁴⁷ Connolly, John Drysdale and the Burdekin, p. 122.

⁴⁸ N.Q.H., 15 January 1910, p. 12.

⁴⁹ John Forrest, Brisbane, to John Drysdale, Pioneer Plantation, Ayr, 6 July 1910, J.C.U., PMR/[C.T/1] Box 7, Article 193.

the Lower Burdekin.⁵⁰ Just over 74,000 acres (115 square miles) of this acquisition is shown in Figure 7.3. The remaining 6,000 acres (9.3 square miles) were located further upstream on the Burdekin River and around Major's Creek, a tributary of the Haughton River. Incorporated into the agreement between the N.A.P.C. and the Crown was the condition that Drysdale Bros. were to receive their free grant of 500 acres and option to purchase a further 780 acres subject to the Company commencing the construction of a sugar mill on the southern side of the Burdekin River.

The announcement of the purchase of the Inkerman Estate was accompanied by the news that the government proposed to extend the railway from Bobawaba to Ayr. This was formalized in December 1910 when assent was given to the North Coast Railway Act which authorized the construction of a railway along the coast of Queensland connecting with the Rockhampton Railway, Mackay Railway, Bowen Railway, Great Northern Railway and Cairns Railway and provided for the purchase of the Proserpine, Ayr and Cairns-Mulgrave Tramways.⁵¹ Work commenced on connecting Bobawaba to Ayr in July 1911 and by August 1912 it was nearly finished except for the building of the bridges. The railway was declared open in September 1913.⁵²

After acquiring the Inkerman Estate in September 1910, the Crown waited until March 1911 before beginning the survey of the country in preparation for its opening to selection.⁵³ Unfortunately, it was not possible to locate the instructions issued to the Surveyor with regard to how to subdivide the country. What is certain, however, is that the Townsville Land Commissioner considered that the areas as designed were in many cases too small to make a living on, especially one block that was sixty-six acres in size.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, included in the first lists of

⁵⁰ W.J. Scott, "Report by the Under Secretary for Public Lands under the Closer Settlement Act of 1906 on the Inkerman Estate", Q.P.P., 2 (1911-1912): 739; N.Q.R., 29 August 1910, p. 23.

⁵¹ Q.G.G., 95 (1910): 1725. An uninterrupted line from Cairns to Brisbane was not finally achieved, however, until 8 December 1924.

⁵² N.Q.R., 24 July 1911, p. 77; Charles Evans, "Railways Commissioner's Annual Report, 1911-1912", Q.P.P., 3 (1911-1912): 430; Charles Evans, "Railways Commissioner's Annual Report, 1912-1913", Q.P.P., 3 (1913): 339.

⁵³ N.Q.R., 20 March 1911, p. 26.

⁵⁴ Horace Trower, Land Commissioner, Townsville, to the Under Secretary for Public Lands, Brisbane, 4 September 1911, Q.S.A., LAN/AE674/L.O. 81, In-letter 30177 of 1911.

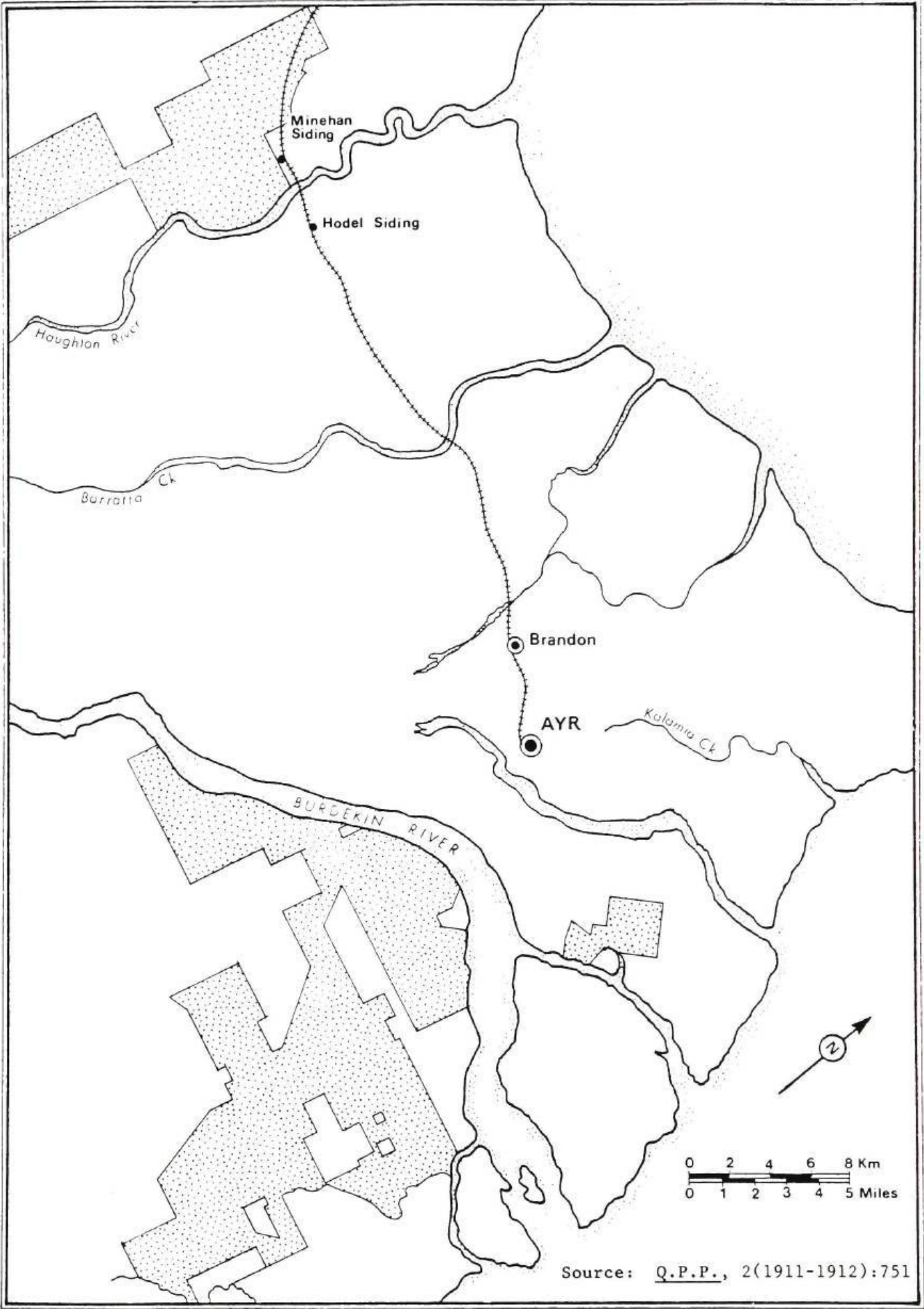


Figure 7.3 The Inkerman Estate: The Lower Burdekin Freehold Lands Purchased from the N.A.P.C. by the Queensland Government in 1910.

the Inkerman Estate blocks advertised for sale in October 1911 was a sixty-six acre portion, indicating the surveyor's original design was kept, despite the Townsville Land Commissioner's objections.⁵⁵

The first sections of the Inkerman Estate offered for sale were 9,650 acres (15 square miles) on the western bank of the Haughton River and 9,740 acres (15.2 square miles) on the southern side of the Burdekin River, around Home Hill (see Figure 7.4). Selectors could purchase the blocks as agricultural farms at the Ayr Court House on the 8th of December 1911. The terms of the land sale were that a buyer could apply for two blocks in one application so long as the area did not exceed the maximum, but an applicant could not make two or more separate applications. Personal residence by the applicant for the first five years was necessary. Successful selectors were required to pay a ten per cent deposit on the price of the block and no further instalment was needed for four years. The balance was to be paid in twenty-one annual instalments, with five per cent interest.

Local newspaper reports indicate there was great interest in the proposed land openings, although on the day prior to the receipt of applications it was observed that "there was not the large personal attendance which some anticipated".⁵⁶ On the day of the land sale 188 applications were received for the 123 portions offered. The Inkerman blocks were favoured over those at the Haughton River, although in both localities much of the country was considered to be good agricultural land suitable for sugar cultivation.⁵⁷ After the ballots on the blocks that had two or more applications, thirty-two of the seventy-nine Inkerman blocks and thirty-six of the forty-four Haughton blocks remained unselected. The unchosen blocks were re-opened for selection on the same terms and conditions at the Townsville Land Office on the 11th of December, 1911. A further nineteen Inkerman blocks and nine Haughton River blocks were chosen by the end of 1911. The remaining Inkerman blocks were all selected in 1912, except for one which was not occupied until 1914 (see Figure 7.5). On the Haughton River, another thirteen blocks were acquired in 1912, before the unselected country was withdrawn from sale. However, the unselected blocks were again thrown open for sale in early

⁵⁵ N.Q.R., 20 October 1911, p. 89; Q.G.G., 97 (1911): 949-950.

⁵⁶ N.Q.R., 11 December 1911, p. 86.

⁵⁷ Horace Trower, Land Commissioner, Townsville, to the Under Secretary for Public Lands, Brisbane, 4 September 1911, Q.S.A., LAN/AE674/L.O. 81, In-letter 10996 of 1912.

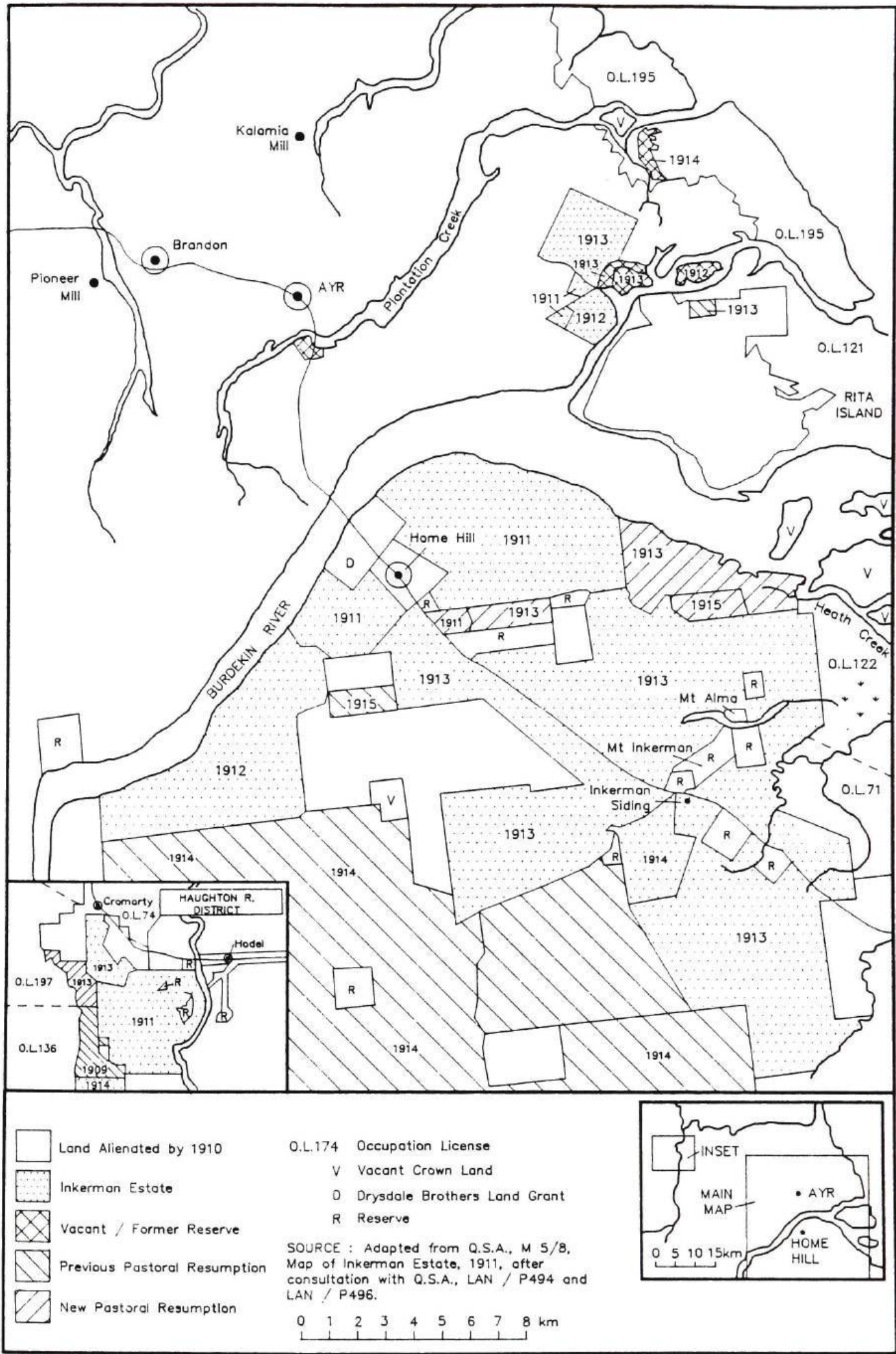


FIGURE 7.4 Crown Land Openings on the Lower Burdekin, 1911 - 1914.

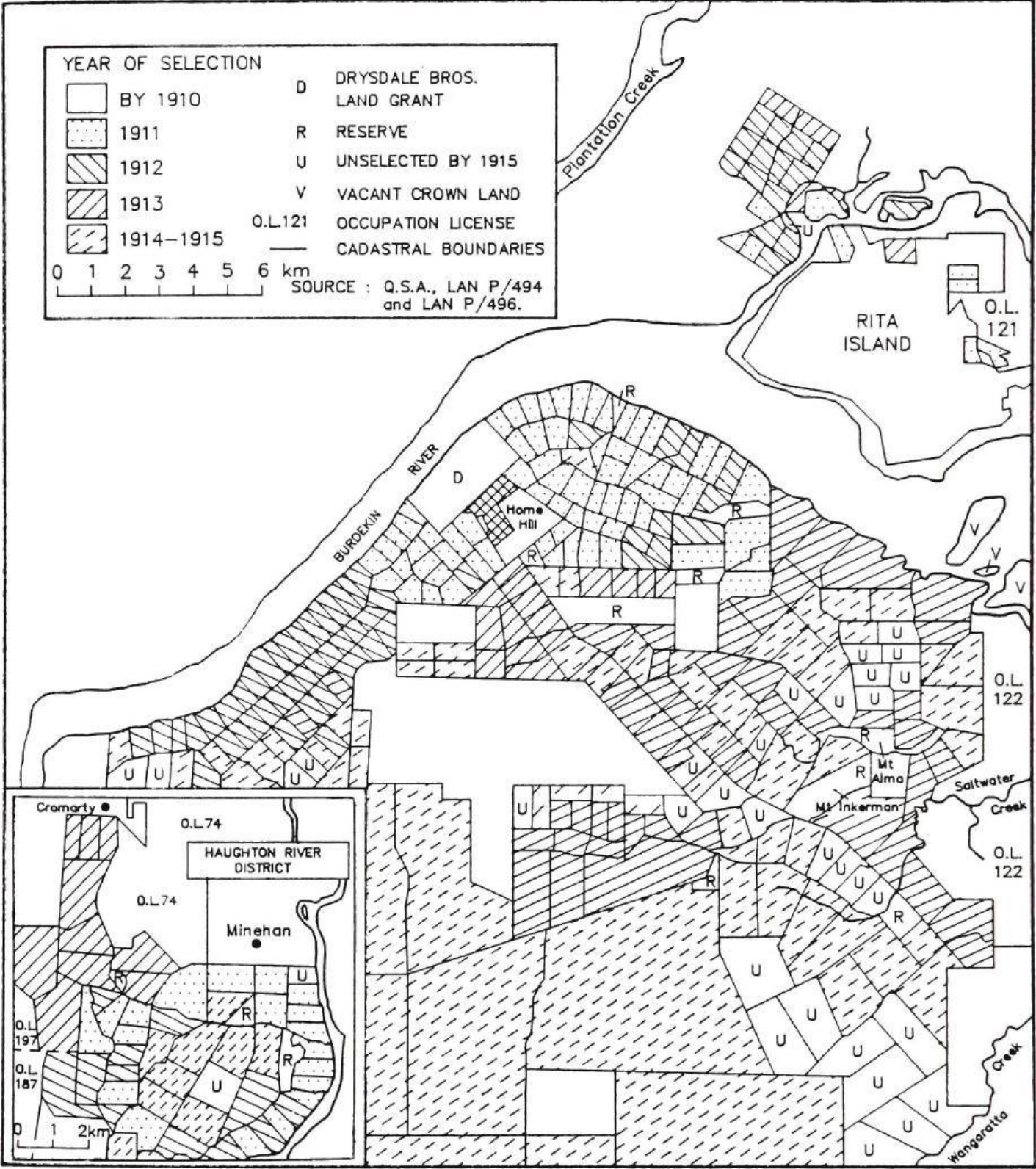


Figure 7.5 The Year of Selection of the Inkerman Estate Blocks

1914.⁵⁸ Immediate interest in the country was not great and it was not until 1915 that all the blocks were chosen (see Figure 7.5).

Following the success of the above land sales, a further 9,200 acres (14.4 square miles) of the Inkerman Estate lands were opened to selection in June 1912 as agricultural farms ranging from seventy to two hundred acres in size.⁵⁹ Just over 2,290 acres (3.5 square miles) of this country were situated on the northern side of the Burdekin River on what was formerly Jarvisfield Estate. Most of the country was considered to be ideally suited to sugar growing, especially because of its close proximity to the tramway systems of both Pioneer and Kalamia Mills. Fourteen of the sixteen blocks that were opened to selection in this locality in June 1912 were chosen by the end of 1912. The remaining two were purchased in 1913 (see Figure 7.5).

The other section thrown open to selection in 1912 was located on the southern side of the Burdekin River, upstream from the country subdivided in 1911 (see Figure 7.4). Parts of this section were considered unsuitable for sugar cultivation and the Townsville Land Commissioner commented that there may be difficulty in attracting settlers for some of the blocks which were a long distance from the mill Drysdale Bros. were constructing.⁶⁰ However, thirty-nine of the fifty-four blocks opened to selection in this section were secured in 1912. An additional ten blocks were purchased during the following two years, before the unselected portions were withdrawn from selection in 1915.⁶¹

The third section of the Inkerman Estate lands comprising 32,000 acres (50 square miles) located between Home Hill and Wangaratta Creek and eastwards towards the coastal lands encompassed in O.L. 122 and 3,450 acres (5.4 square miles) south of Cromarty Siding was opened to selection as agricultural farms in October 1913 (see Figure 7.4).⁶² The Inkerman Farmers' and Graziers' Association (I.F.G.A.) suggested to the government in August 1913 that this subdivision should be delayed until

⁵⁸ Q.G.G., 101 (1913): 1494-1495.

⁵⁹ Q.G.G., 98 (1912): 1181, 1185, 1186.

⁶⁰ Horace Trower, Land Commissioner, Townsville, to the Under Secretary for Public Lands, Brisbane, 1 April 1912, Q.S.A., LAN/AE674/L.O. 81; In-letter 10996 of 1912.

⁶¹ Q.G.G., 105 (1915): 95.

⁶² Q.G.G., 101 (1913): 310-312.

such time as Drysdale Bros. agreed to provide a proper tramway system over the Inkerman lands, except under conditions the farmers found they could not accept, namely that they agree to pay working expenses and interest on the capital invested.⁶³ The government did not accede to the settler's request, for the Townsville Land Commissioner thought that most of this section was more suited to dairying, not sugar cultivation. Intending settlers would not require tramways and in any case the newly constructed railway traversed the area.⁶⁴

Interest in this third subdivision of the Inkerman Estate lands was only moderate. The ten blocks south of Cromarty Siding were all chosen, but only 61 of the 122 blocks declared available for selection south of Home Hill were purchased in 1913 (see Figure 7.5). Over the next eighteen months the government sought to dispose of the unselected portions and a small section south-west of Mt. Inkerman. It succeeded in attracting buyers for thirty-nine of the sixty-six blocks. Eventually, in August 1915 the government withdrew the twenty-seven unselected portions from sale.⁶⁵

The purchase and subdivision of the Inkerman Estate lands was one of the biggest closer settlement schemes attempted by the Queensland Government under the closer settlement legislation that operated between 1894 and 1917. Only Cecil Plains and Jimbour Estates on the Darling Downs were slightly bigger.⁶⁶ In addition, the sale of the Inkerman Estate lands within the study area for this thesis was also very successful. Only 32 of the 331 agricultural farms opened to selection had not been purchased for the first time by 1915. The blocks that remained unsecured were comprised mainly of poorer quality country, not ideally suited to agriculture.

The success of the Inkerman Estate land sales depended upon a ready availability of willing selectors with a small amount of capital who

⁶³ J.H. Watt, Sec., I.F.G.A., to the Hon. Minister for Lands, Brisbane, 28 August 1913, Q.S.A., LAN/AE674/L.O. 81, In-letter 27076 of 1913.

⁶⁴ Horace Trower, Land Commissioner, Townsville, to the Under Secretary, Department of Public Lands, Brisbane, 25 May 1913, Q.S.A., LAN/AE674/L.O. 81, In-letter 16303 of 1913.

⁶⁵ Q.G.G., 105 (1915): 85, 87, 88, 95.

⁶⁶ Camm, "Land Settlement and the Development of Farming under the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act of 1894 and Closer Settlement Acts, 1906-1917", p. 27.

were prepared to settle on their purchases. Who were the men and women that chose to settle on the Inkerman Estate lands? Fortunately, successful applicants for the blocks of Inkerman Estate lands were required to provide their occupation and place of residence on the application form. This information is summarized in Tables 7.4 and 7.5.

Applicants as far north as Cairns and as far south as the Macleay River in New South Wales were successful in securing a block on the Inkerman Estate. However, over forty percent of the successful applicants recorded Ayr as their place of residence. Moreover, if the number of successful applicants from all the local addresses (i.e. Ayr, Home Hill, Inkerman Siding, Brandon, Hodel Siding, Minehan Siding) are added together, over sixty-eight per cent of the successful applicants could be classified as being local. This figure, however, probably overestimates the true situation, for it is reasonable to assume that some of the applicants had travelled to the Lower Burdekin from other northern centres for the land sales and provided a local address. Nevertheless, a significant proportion of the applicants, possibly fifty per cent or more were locals.

Nearly forty per cent of the successful applicants described themselves as labourers or farm labourers, while another thirty per cent called themselves farmers or cane farmers. It is possible, however, that some of those who called themselves farmers were describing what they intended doing and may have actually been employed in some other occupation. It is interesting to note that only sixteen classified themselves as miners, although undoubtedly many of those who called themselves labourers were ex-miners or were in some way associated with the mining industry. Most likely they had been on the Lower Burdekin for a short time, employed as labourers. Whatever the case, the majority of the successful applicants knew nothing about sugar-cane cultivation according to one of the earliest settlers on the Inkerman Estate. All that some of them had by way of implements was a mattock, axe and a shovel. These tools were to combat the heavy forest which covered most blocks.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Connolly, *John Drysdale and the Burdekin*, p. 138. Quoting from the *H.H.O.*, 11 August 1961.

Table 7.4. Recorded Residence of Inkerman Estate Selectors,
1911-1915

Ayr	Home Hill	Charters Towers	Inkerman Siding	Hodel, Minehan and Cromarty Sidings	Townsville	Brandon	Cairns	Brisbane	Mackay	Other	TOTAL
107	29	25	19	20	18	11	9	5	3	26	272

NOTE: Selectors who chose two or more blocks between 1911 and 1915 were only counted once.

Data Source: Selection files in Q.S.A. LAN/DF 4864-4910.

Table 7.5. Recorded Occupation of Inkerman Estate
Selectors, 1911-1915

Labourer/Farm Labourer	Farmer/Cane Farmer	¹ Tradesmen	Domestic Duties	Miner	² Businessmen	Grazier	Teamster	Dairymen	Other	TOTAL
101	79	19	17	16	12	9	5	2	12	272

¹ Carpenters, blacksmiths, plumbers, etc.

² Publicans, auctioneers, chemists, etc.

Data Source: As in Table 7.4.

7.3.4 Freehold Estate Subdivisions, 1902-1913

In early June 1902 the A.N.Z.M. Co. announced it had subdivided a section of the Airdmillan Estate closest to Ayr into sixty unimproved farms ranging from forty to sixty acres. These farms would be offered for sale at an auction later in the month. Unfortunately for the A.N.Z.M. Co., little interest was shown in the subdivision and not one block was sold at the auction.⁶⁸ It is difficult to assess why these farms at Airdmillan failed to attract the notice of settlers, given that they were situated close to Ayr and Kalamia Mill. It is possible, however, that the initial price for the land or terms of sale may have been unacceptable to selectors and that they were subsequently modified. Whatever the reasons, it took a decade before all of the farms on this section of the Airdmillan Estate were purchased (see Figure 7.6).

The lack of immediate interest shown in the Airdmillan subdivision in 1902 did not deter the owners of Ripley Estate from announcing in November 1903 that they were splitting their holding into thirty farms ranging from forty to two hundred acres in size.⁶⁹ However, interest in the farms at the public auction in December was so poor that once again not one farm was sold, despite the advertisement claiming that the estate comprised some of the finest alluvials in North Queensland. The idea to subdivide the estate must have been quickly abandoned for there is no further mention of farms being for sale in that locality. Indeed, Ripley Estate was still intact at the end of this study in 1930.⁷⁰

The failure of the Airdmillan and Ripley subdivisions, however, did not stop the subdivision of other Lower Burdekin estates. In 1904 Macdesme Estate and the southern section of Norham Estate were split into blocks ranging from 80-240 acres. It cost approved buyers between £3 and £6 per acre on terms extending over ten years to secure land at Macdesme.⁷¹ The outlay required to obtain the farms at Norham could not be discovered, but it is reasonable to assume that it was similar to that needed to purchase the Macdesme farms. Unlike the lack of immediate interest in the Airdmillan and Ripley subdivisions, many of the blocks at Norham and Macdesme were secured by 1908 (see Figure 7.6).

⁶⁸ N.Q.H., 7 June 1902, p. 32; P.D.T., 20 September 1902.

⁶⁹ N.Q.H., 21 November 1903, p. 51.

⁷⁰ T.T.O., Vol. 187/222.

⁷¹ N.Q.H., 12 February 1906, p. 77; N.Q.H., 28 May 1906, p. 69.

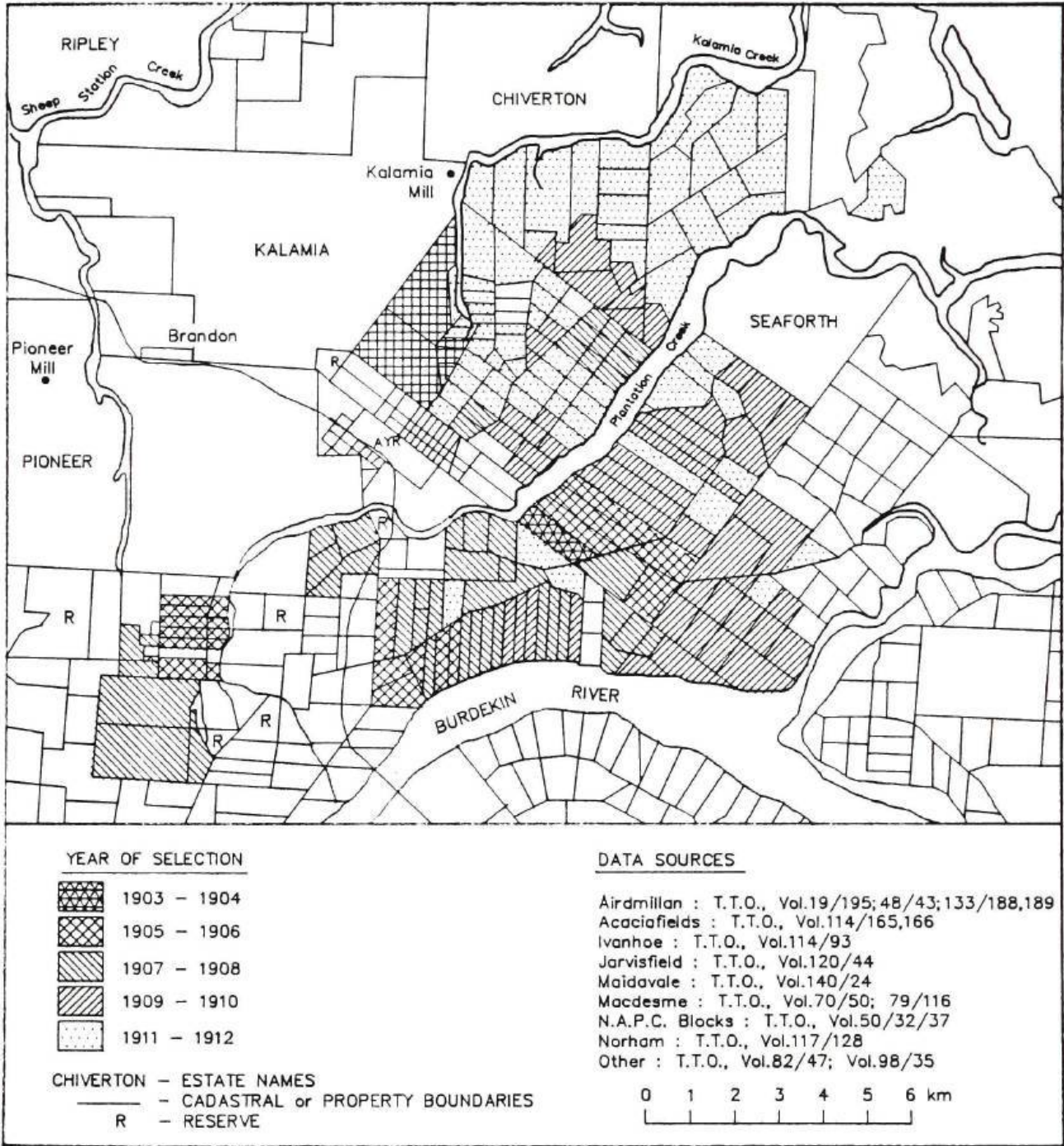


Figure 7.6 Estate Subdivisions on the Lower Burdekin, 1903 - 1911

The successful subdivision of the above estates undoubtedly influenced the N.A.P.C., for in 1906 the Company subdivided its three holdings on Plantation Creek into fifteen blocks ranging from 100-150 acres in size. Settlers could choose the N.A.P.C. blocks for

at about £3 per acre on terms extending over a period of ten years. Beyond a small deposit as a guarantee of good faith, nothing is asked for during the first two years of occupation.⁷²

Most of these blocks were selected during 1907-1908 (see Figure 7.6).

Drysdale Bros. in 1906 also split a section of Maidavale Estate into twenty-five farms around sixty acres in size. Purchasers could obtain these blocks, cleared of heavy timber, for the sum of £10 per acre to be paid in ten yearly installments of £1 per acre per annum.⁷³ Drysdale Bros. were able to dispose of most of these farms by 1910 (see Figure 7.6). In addition, Drysdale Bros. from 1906 onwards also began to lease parts of Pioneer Estate at Klondyke and Dick's Bank to tenant farmers, thereby bringing about in fact a subdivision of the estate into smaller blocks. Similarly, Australian Estates in 1906 began to lease to farmers sections of Kalamia Estate, including blocks on the two large subdivisions on Airdmillan Estate it had purchased from the A.N.Z.M. Co. in early 1906. Further details on these subdivisions on Pioneer and Kalamia Estates will be provided more fully during the discussion on the demise of the Lower Burdekin plantations in Chapter 7.5.2.

Interest in obtaining small farmers on the Lower Burdekin continued in the late 1900s and resulted in further estate subdivisions. The N.A.P.C. followed its success in splitting up the Plantation Creek blocks by subdividing the southern section of Jarvisfield Estate in late 1909. Most of these blocks were chosen in 1910 (see Figure 7.6), before the remainder of Jarvisfield Estate was purchased by the Crown as part of the Inkerman Estate. The subdivision of Jarvisfield Estate in 1909 was accompanied by the A.N.Z.M. Co.'s subdivision of Ivanhoe Estate, the northern section of Norham Estate and three of the four remaining intact blocks on Airdmillan Estate. In contrast to the lack of interest in the previous subdivisions initiated by the A.N.Z.M. Co., all the small blocks offered by the Company in 1909 were selected by 1914. In addition, many of the unsold portions on the section of Airdmillan Estate subdivided in 1902 were purchased in the late 1900s. However, of the forty-seven

⁷² N.Q.R., 28 May 1906, p. 69.

⁷³ John Drysdale to William Payard, 28 May 1906, J.C.U., PMR/LB/30, p. 446.

blocks opened to selection by the A.N.Z.M. Co. in 1909, just under half were initially acquired by the Airdmillan Land Company,⁷⁴ a firm which was obviously involved in land speculation, for over half of its Lower Burdekin purchases had been re-sold within two years (see Figure 7.7).

The final estate subdivided in this period was located on the south-eastern edge of Jarvisfield Estate and fronted onto the Anabranh. In late 1913 it was split into ten blocks ranging from fifty to one hundred acres in size. Purchasers could obtain sections by providing one-half of the value of the land in a cash deposit, with the balance being paid in equal instalments over a one to three year period.⁷⁵ All the blocks were selected at auction in early 1914 and subsequently paid off very quickly, for all the sections were recorded as having new owners in 1915 (see Figure 7.6).

7.3.5 Overview

Reference to Figure 7.8 reveals that about half of all the land selected on the Lower Burdekin in this period was secured as grazing farms. Most of this land was acquired between 1902 and 1906 and in 1913 and 1914. Its availability was associated with the resumptions from the region's remaining occupation licenses. A third of the total acreage selected between 1902 and 1915 was obtained as agricultural farms/homesteads. It was mainly chosen during the years 1909-1915 and was related to the Inkerman Estate openings and purchases on Rita Island. Selection from the subdivision of freehold estates, which mainly occurred from 1906-1912 contributed to about only ten per cent of the total acreage selected in this period. However, this amount was quite a significant increase on the sales from the mainly unsuccessful freehold estate subdivisions in previous decades. Lastly, unconditional and perpetual lease selections accounted for only a fraction of the total acreage selected on the Lower Burdekin in the 1900s and early 1910s. There was, however, a noticeable increase in these selections in 1915, as much of the land secured in 1915 was not of good quality and it was easier to dispose of as unconditional selections.

⁷⁴ Formed in Brisbane in 1911 with the purpose of "buying and selling land in Queensland", the principal partners were Robert Philp, a partner in Burns, Philp and Co. and former Premier of Queensland and two Brisbane merchants, David Trail and William Brown (Q.S.A., A/28193).

⁷⁵ N.Q.R., 8 December 1913, p. 59; N.Q.R., 26 January 1914, p. 2.

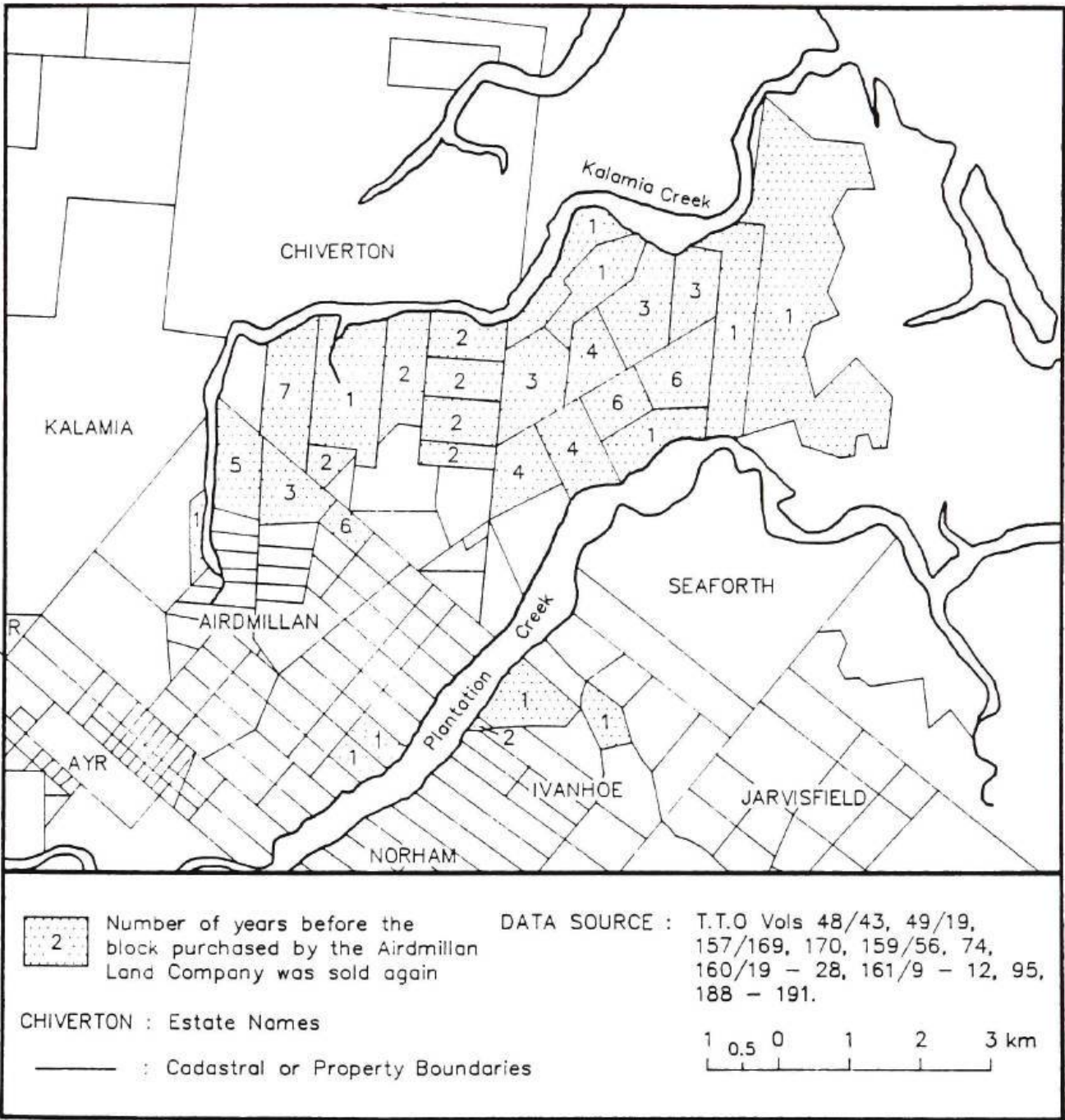


Figure 7.7 Land Purchased by the Airdmillan Land Company, 1911 - 1912.

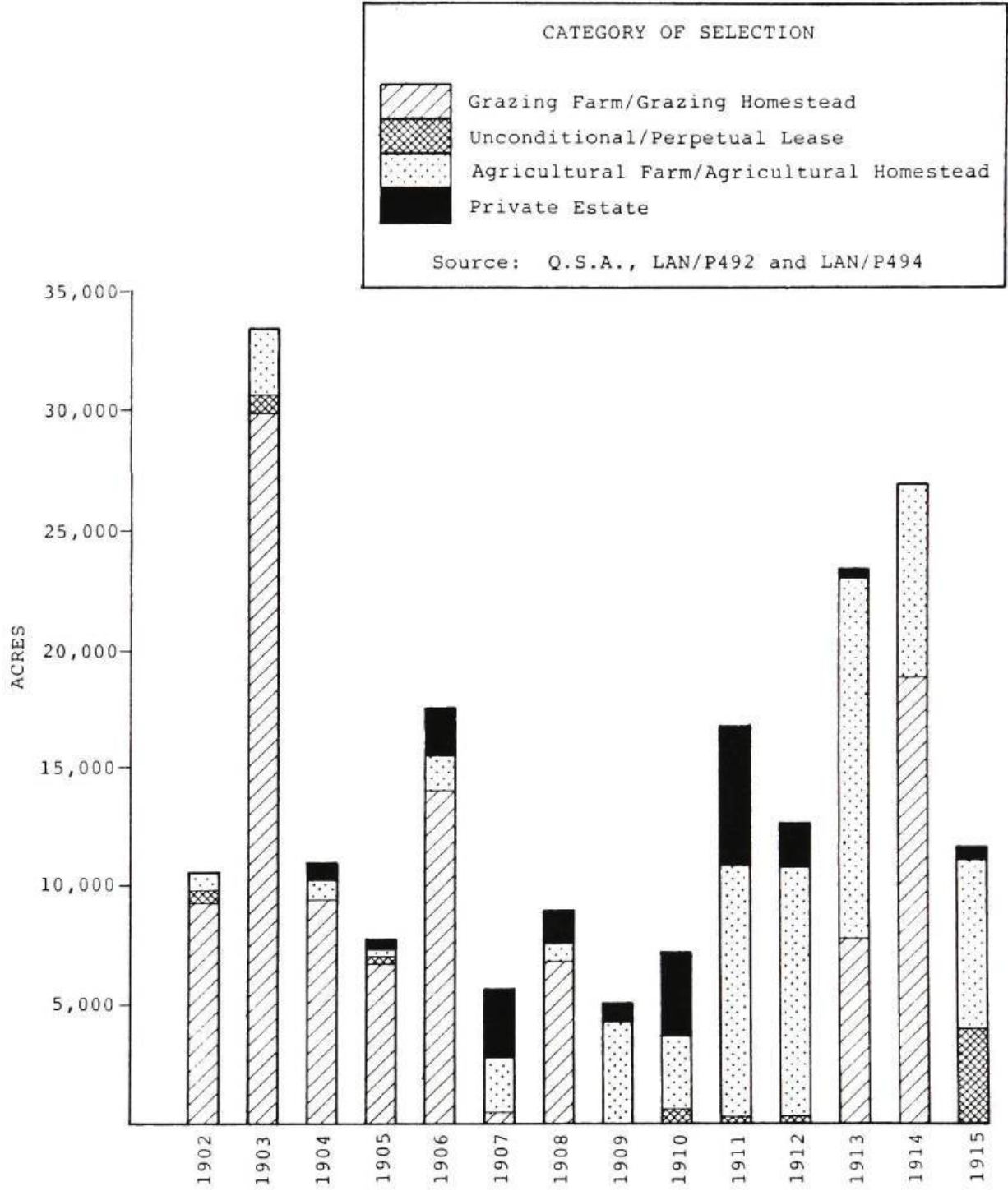


Figure 7.8 Acres Selected on the Lower Burdekin, 1902-1915.

What triggered off this demand for land on the Lower Burdekin in the 1900s, after a lull in the previous decade? Essentially, it was the decline in the gold production at Charters Towers and Ravenswood causing unemployment amongst miners.⁷⁶ The unemployed miners began to consider alternative employment such as farm labouring or farming. However, as Bolton argues, it was more than just the decline in mining, for at this time the coastal sugar growing regions in North Queensland needed European labour acclimatized to the tropics to replace the departing Melanesians and to take up the plantation lands being subdivided.⁷⁷ The Lower Burdekin being closely located to Charters Towers and Ravenswood was in a favourable position to attract unemployed miners considering working as farm labourers or farmers. In addition, the Lower Burdekin was perceived as containing an abundance of good land that was ideally suited for sugar growing.⁷⁸ Consequently, the influx of settlers and workers onto the Lower Burdekin after 1905 generated a demand for land which was met by estate subdivisions, including the Crown's subdivision of the Inkerman Estate lands.

The subdivision of the plantations and other freehold estates and the opening up of the Inkerman Estate lands to closer settlement resulted in the development of a new landscape on the Lower Burdekin in the 1900s and early 1910s. Many of the small blocks, which ultimately developed into sugar-cane farms, replaced the larger, freehold cadasters previously used for extensive sugar cultivation or cattle grazing. This resulted in the breakdown of the nucleated settlement pattern of the plantation period and facilitated the emergence of a more dispersed rural settlement pattern. In addition, the emerging landscape, south of Ayr and on the southern side of the Burdekin River was traversed after 1910 by a railway, which included a low level bridge across the Burdekin River. This bridge at last allowed greater contact between the Ayr and Inkerman sides of the Burdekin River and provided a continuous link between Townsville and Bowen. A new town, named Home Hill, was also established to service the needs of the local population on the southern

⁷⁶ Bolton, A Thousand Miles Away, pp. 271-274.

⁷⁷ Bolton, A Thousand Miles Away, p. 276.

⁷⁸ For this view see N.Q.R., 12 February 1906, p. 77; N.Q.H., 28 May 1906, p. 60; 'Extract from the Annual Report of Mr. H. Trower, Land Commissioner for the Townsville Land Agent's District', Q.P.P., 2 (1907): 559.

side of the Burdekin River,⁷⁹ while there was a rapid increase in the population of and services offered by the district's other two towns, Ayr and Brandon.⁸⁰

Finally, many of the new settlers in the region turned to sugar growing as a living. Consequently, as mentioned in the introduction, there was an expansion in sugar-cane cultivation on the Lower Burdekin in the 1900s. This increase, together with other structural changes to the district's sugar industry will now be considered, beginning with a review of the impact the Commonwealth's decision to deport the Melanesian community from Queensland after 1906 had on the Lower Burdekin planters and farmers.

7.4 RELUCTANT EMPLOYERS OF EUROPEANS, 1902-1905: THE LOWER BURDEKIN SUGAR GROWERS' REACTION TO THE PACIFIC ISLAND LABOURERS ACT OF 1901

John Drysdale had stated in 1901 that the small farmers on the Lower Burdekin had not at any time considered the use of 'white' labourers.⁸¹ This assertion may be so, but given the Commonwealth's incentives to do so, some began to consider the possibility. In 1902, twenty-nine farmers on the Lower Burdekin registered their intention to claim the Commonwealth's rebate.⁸² However, as shown in Table 7.1, no figures on the number of acres grown and harvested by 'white' labour on the Lower Burdekin in 1902 were provided in the official statistics. The absence of such figures could possibly indicate that no sugar-cane was grown and harvested by 'white' labour on the Lower Burdekin in 1902, or that the information was not collected, or if collected omitted from the

⁷⁹ The first sale of Home Hill town allotments occurred in late January 1913 (see N.Q.R., 3 February 1913, p. 95). Early descriptions of the growth of the town can be found in the North Queensland Register in 1914 and early 1915. (e.g. N.Q.R., 25 May 1914, p. 54; N.Q.R., 29 June 1914, p. 38; N.Q.R., 1 February 1915, p. 50).

⁸⁰ The population of Ayr and Brandon in 1901 was 388 and 141, respectively. It had risen to 1,236 and 689 respectively by 1911 (see "Census of Queensland", Q.P.P., 2 (1902): 982 and "Census of the Commonwealth of Australia", Vol. 3 (1911), pp. 2251, 2255). For details in the expansion of services c.f. Pugh's Almanac (Country Directory), 1901, pp. 716, 728 and Pugh's Almanac (Country Directory), 1912, pp. 693-698, pp. 707-709.

⁸¹ Queenslander, 8 June 1901, p. 1108.

⁸² W.H. Irving, Collector of Customs, Brisbane, to the Under Secretary, Premier's Department, Brisbane, 12 April 1901, Q.S.A., PRE/87, In-letter 03399 of 1902.

Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture and Stock for 1902. Whatever the case, the amount of cane grown and harvested by 'white' labour in 1902 was probably quite small, for in 1903 only fourteen percent of Lower Burdekin's sugar-cane was grown and harvested by 'white' labour. Indeed, before 1906 'black' labour continued to grow and harvest most of the sugar-cane in northern Queensland (see Table 7.1).

The reliance on Melanesians and Asiatics to harvest most of the sugar-cane north of Bowen before 1905 was, as mentioned earlier, caused by growers not attempting to phase in 'white' workers at all, but making the most of the available Pacific Islanders before they were deported. On the Lower Burdekin this was certainly true of Drysdale Bros., who made no attempt before 1905 to employ 'whites' to harvest their cane. Indeed, Drysdale Bros. and Australian Estates actively recruited Melanesians for their plantations before the deadline in March 1904,⁸³ resulting in an upsurge in the number of Pacific Islanders on the Lower Burdekin in the early 1900s (see Table 6.3).

The willingness of sugar growers to employ Pacific Islanders, despite not receiving the bounty offered by the Federal Government, resulted from farmers and planters initially finding 'white' labourers unreliable. On the Lower Burdekin, drunkenness amongst the 'white' labourers was reported to be a problem,⁸⁴ while often the growers found the 'white' workers unskilled in the tasks required of them.⁸⁵ The attitude of the Lower Burdekin farmers towards 'white' workers in the early 1900s was not uncommon. Farmers from other regions complained of similar problems.⁸⁶ However, as Hunt argues, many Europeans were

⁸³ C.R. Moore, "Statistics compiled from Pioneer Mill's Pacific Islanders Register, 1978", J.C.U., PMR/MISC 29; John Drysdale to the Under Secretary, Premier's Department, Brisbane, 2 November 1901, J.C.U., PMR/LB/27, p. 323; N.Q.H., 13 February 1902, p. 32; H.G. Bell, Kalamia, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., Melbourne, 21 October 1903, K.M.A., Account Journal, 1897-1904.

⁸⁴ See N.Q.H., 5 November 1904, p. 35, and Q.P.P., 2 (1906): Ev. George Campbell, p. 846, Qs. 12942, 12956.

⁸⁵ See H.G. Bell, "Manager's Annual Report for Kalamia Estate, 1904", A.N.U., Archives of Business and Labour, A.E.R. 165/305; Q.P.P., 2 (1906): Ev. Charles Gray, p. 846, Q. 12838; Ev. George Campbell, p. 846; Q.12945; and N.Q.H., 5 November 1904, p. 35.

⁸⁶ For example see Q.P.P., 2 (1906): Ev. J. Edwards, Mackay, p. 648, Q.6094; Ev. F. Fraser, Ingham, p. 823, Q.12153; Ev. G. Handley, Bundaberg, p. 558, Q.3176; Ev. A. Jack, Mossman, p. 725, Q.8965; Ev. C.E. Jodrell, Innisfail, p. 802, Q.11503; and Ev. P.G. Ellis, Cairns, p. 740, Q.9476.

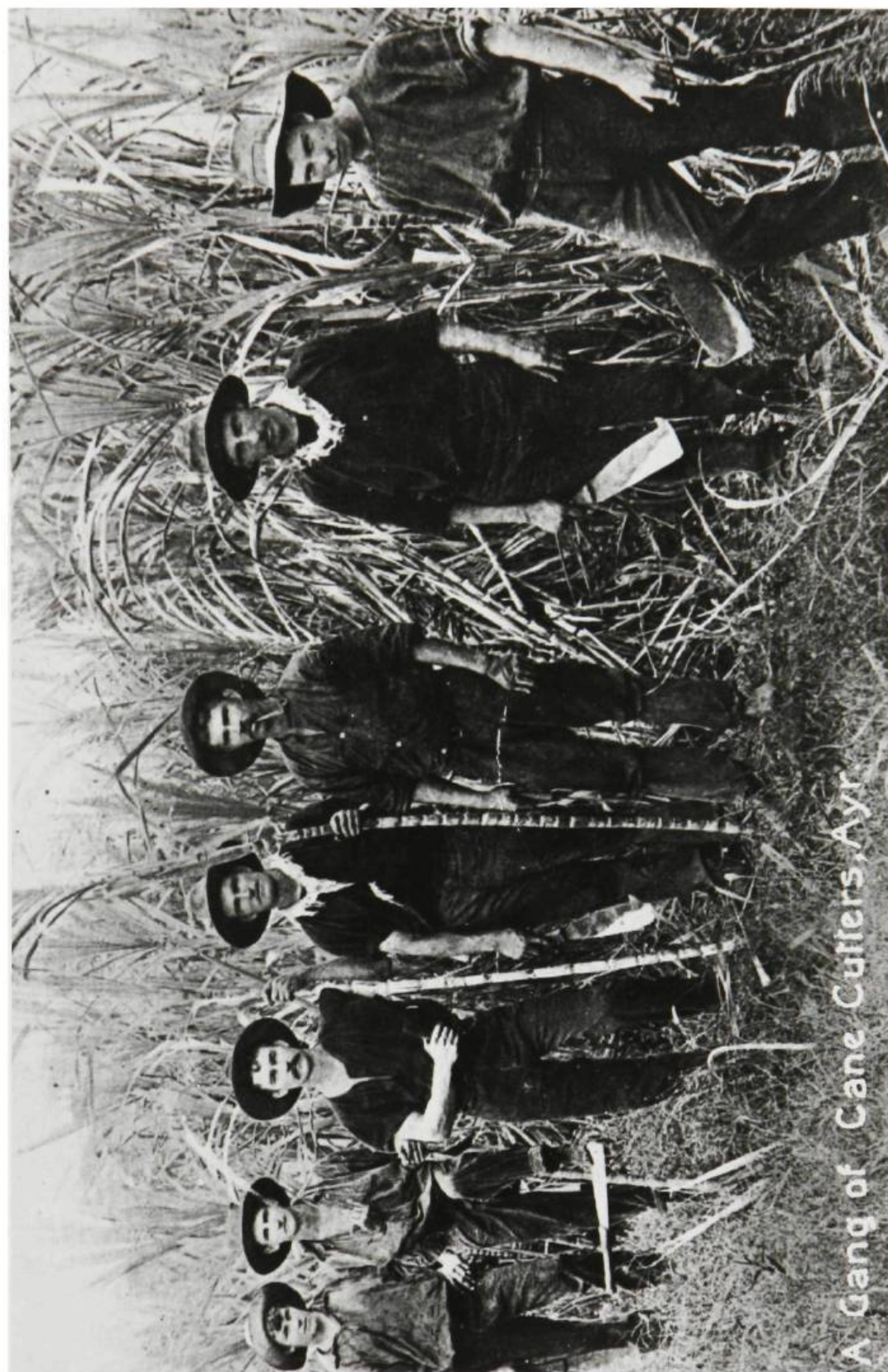


Plate 12 A gang of Cane Cutters, Ayr, c. 1905.
European labourers replaced Melanesians as
the main workers in the cane fields in the
1900s.

Photo: Courtesy of John Oxley Library.

unaccustomed to the physical demands of the work or accepted employment in the sugar fields as only a temporary measure.⁸⁷

Besides encouraging the employment of European in the canefields, what other impact did the Commonwealth's anti-Melanesian legislation have on the Lower Burdekin sugar industry between 1902 and 1905? Firstly, reference to Table 7.6 shows that the industry on the Lower Burdekin did not collapse, despite George Drysdale's prediction of otherwise.⁸⁸ There was, however, an immediate drop in the amount of cane harvested on the Lower Burdekin in 1902 and 1903 compared to the crops harvested in the late 1890s (see Tables 6.5 and 7.6). This was caused, not as a result of growers abandoning sugar-cane cultivation, as may be suggested in Table 7.6, but due to a severe drought in 1902 and the damage to the crops from Cyclone Leonta in 1903. Indeed, by 1905 the number of growers supplying the mills had returned to the 1901 level and more cane was harvested in the district than in the years immediately before the Federal Government's stance against the employment of Melanesians in the sugar industry.

Reference to Table 7.6 also shows that the Commonwealth's anti-Melanesian legislation had little impact on the relative contributions made by the planters and small farmers to the Lower Burdekin sugar crop between 1902 and 1905. As in the 1890s, the planters in the early 1900s remained the single largest producer of cane in the district. In fact, with the exception of 1904, the planters between 1902 and 1905 still managed to produce more cane than the combined crops from the lessee farmers and other growers. Indeed, if the amount of harvested cane grown by the planters is combined with that harvested by the plantation lessees, then in the early 1900s, as in the late 1890s, at least seventy per cent of the district's cane continued to be grown on plantation lands. In addition, most of the district's crops continued to be crushed at Pioneer Mill (see Table 7.7).

It appears, therefore, that the Lower Burdekin sugar industry underwent few changes in the early 1900s, except for some of the growers using 'whites' to harvest their crops. This lack of change, however, did not continue throughout the remainder of the 1900s. As will be seen in the next section, the sugar industry on the Lower

⁸⁷ Hunt, "Exclusivism and Unionism", p. 87.

⁸⁸ George Drysdale to Robert Tullis, 28 August 1902, J.C.U., PMR/[C.T/1] Box 7, Article 83.

Table 7.6. Tons of Cane Crushed on the Lower Burdekin Classified by its Grower, 1901-1912

Grower	1901	1902	1903	1904	1905	1906	1907	1908	1909	1910	1911	1912
Planter/Miller	39244*	34144	40287	44691	47267	46519	25129	**	13136	13961	5086	1454
Plantation Lessees	19022	9563	12775	22438	12576	14774	25900	**	36430	48057	44926	22393
Other farmers	16357	6710	8462	27650	25225	44044	58013	**	57830	101633	104359	42388
Total	74623	50417	61523	94779	85068	105337	109042	122371	107396	163651	154371	66235
Number of growers	50	34	34	45	51	73	101	124	140	160	182	183

* Does not include figures for Kalamia Plantation.
** Figures were not available.

Source: Compiled from the tons of cane delivered to the Lower Burdekin mills. These amounts are found in the following sources:
J.C.U., PMR/[MISC/2] Box 11, Article 14: Record of Weekly Cane Deliveries 1900-1910;
P.M.B., Register of Pioneer Mill Growers, 1907-1914;
K.M.A., Manager's Instructions and Memoranda Book, 1898-1901, p.21;
K.M.A., Manufacturer's Material Crushing Book for Sugar Cane, 1902-1908; and
K.M.A., Ledger Book, 1909-1915, pp. 65, 93, 281.

Table 7.7. Tons of Cane Crushed at the Lower Burdekin Mills,
1902-1912.

Year	Pioneer	Kalamia	Total
1902	31033 (61) ¹	19384	50417
1903	61523(100)	(2)	61523
1904	66101 (70)	28618	94719
1905	60048 (71)	25020	85068
1906	71613 (68)	33724	105337
1907	77279 (71)	31763	109042
1908	89364 (73)	33007	122371
1909	71826 (67)	35570	107396
1910	96582 (59)	67069	163651
1911	90256 (58)	64115	154371
1912	44763 (68)	21472	66235

NOTES: (1) The figure in brackets refers to the tons of cane crushed at Pioneer Mill as a percentage of the total amount of cane crushed on the Lower Burdekin.

(2) Kalamia Mill did not crush in 1903. Its crop of 19,466 tons of sugar-cane was diverted to Pioneer Mill.

Source: Assembled from figures provided in Anon., Pioneer Sugar Mills (Pty.) Ltd., 1884-1958 (n.p.: Pioneer Sugar Mills (Pty.) Ltd., 1958), p. 24 and Annual Reports of the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Stock, 1902-1913, in Q.P.P.

Burdekin in 1912, after the cessation of Federal intervention, was markedly different to that which operated in 1905.

7.5 THE EMERGENCE OF THE PROPRIETARY CENTRAL MILLS, 1906-1912

7.5.1 Introduction

After 1905 the Lower Burdekin sugar industry underwent a significant transformation. Three processes of change occurred simultaneously: firstly, Drysdale Bros. and Australian Estates ceased plantation agriculture and subdivided their estates into small farms which were leased to tenants; secondly, the areal extent of the industry expanded considerably as farmers in new locations commenced cane cultivation; and thirdly, European labour replaced Melanesians in the canefields. Each of these processes will now be examined separately.

7.5.2 Ending the Plantations

Soon after hearing of the Commonwealth's decision to stop the recruitment of Melanesians to Australia after 1904, Australian Estates again contemplated abandoning sugar-cane cultivation on the Lower Burdekin.⁸⁹ This did not occur, and although no record could be found to indicate John Drysdale convinced Australian Estates to do so, it is probable his advice was sought. Moreover, it seems John Drysdale was considering the possibility of running the plantations after 1906 using European labour, for gangs of 'white' workers were employed at Kalamia at least in 1904 and on Pioneer Estate in 1906.⁹⁰ However, it is certain that Australian Estates found 'white' workers unsatisfactory,⁹¹ and it reasonable to assume that Drysdale Bros. did likewise. As such, it would appear that both companies concluded that it would not be feasible to continue large scale sugar-cane cultivation after the departure of their Melanesians in December 1906, if they were required to only employ

⁸⁹ Notes of an Interview between Messrs. Malcolmson, Williamson Senior and George Drysdale, 6 February 1902, A.N.U., Archives of Business and Labour, A.E.R., 165/137, Mail Letterbook No. 2, p. 303.

⁹⁰ H.G. Bell, "Manager's Annual Report for Kalamia Estate, 1904", A.N.U., Archives of Business and Labour, A.E.R. 165/305; N.Q.H., 18 December 1905, p. 18; P.M.B., Pioneer Estate's Annual Balance Sheet, 1906.

⁹¹ H.G. Bell, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., Melbourne, 6 January 1906, K.M.A., Letterbook, 1897-1907, p. 399.

'white' workers. Furthermore, they also decided that instead of allowing their lands to become idle they would lease them to tenants.

As a result of the above decisions each firm after 1906 slowly reduced the amount of sugar-cane it grew. By 1908 only thirteen per cent of the total crop crushed at Pioneer Mill was still grown by Drysdale Bros., compared to thirty-seven per cent in 1906. Moreover, Drysdale Bros. in 1908 only grew their crop at Home Estate and Klondyke, for they had ceased cane growing at Dick's Bank in 1907 (Table 7.8). Unfortunately, the figures for the amount of the crop harvested and crushed at Kalamia Mill and still grown by Australian Estates could not be found for 1908. However, based on a comparison of the 1907 and 1909 figures, it is certain that the Company disbanded cultivating the crop at Seaforth after 1906, as the lands had been leased to William Conley, a former sugar boiler at Kalamia Mill.⁹² Most of the cane grown by Australian Estates in 1908 was probably located on Home Estate, near Kalamia Mill, as the rest of Home Estate, as will be seen shortly, had been leased to small farmers in 1906, although some of the crop could have still been cultivated at Klondyke.

From 1908 onwards there was a further yearly reduction in the amount of cane grown by Drysdale Bros. and Australian Estates, so that Australian Estates by 1912 had stopped growing sugar-cane on the Lower Burdekin, although Drysdale Bros. was still cultivating the crop for their mill on Home Estate (see Table 7.8). Indeed, it was only after the 1924 season that Drysdale Bros. abandoned growing sugar-cane on Home Estate for Pioneer Mill. This part of the estate was then leased to a tenant farmer.⁹³

As Australian Estates and Drysdale Bros. reduced the amount of sugar-cane they cultivated on the Lower Burdekin in the mid-1900s, they began to lease the estate lands they no longer utilized to small farmers. Intending lessees were offered what the Manager of Kalamia Mill believed

⁹² John Drysdale had recommended to the London Board of Australian Estates in 1906 that Seaforth Estate be sold (Sec., A.E.M. Co., Melbourne, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, 23 May 1906, M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book No. 11, p. 92). This recommendation was agreed to by the London Board, but Australian Estates had to settle on leasing the lands to William Conley until he could afford to purchase the estate in 1914 (T.T.O., Vol. 107/207).

⁹³ P.M.B., Register of Pioneer Mill Growers, 1920-1934, p. 74.

Table 7.8. Tons of Cane Harvested from Kalamia and Pioneer Estates, According to the Location on the Estate, 1906-1912

Location	1906	1907	1908	1909	1910	1911	1912
PIONEER ESTATE							
Dick's Bank	7219	3388	0	0	0	0	0
Klondyke	12369	10334	8442	6561	8367	0	0
Home Estate	7367	4737	3937	2628	3412	3195	1454
TOTAL ESTATE	26955 (37)	18458 (24)	12379 (13)	9189 (13)	11779 (12)	3195 (4)	1454 (3)
TOTAL CROP	71613	77279	92205	71826	96582	90256	44763
KALAMIA ESTATE							
Seaforth	3450	0	No	0	0	0	0
Home Estate	14943	2879	Figures	3947	2182	1891	0
Klondyke	1171	3692	Available	0	0	0	0
TOTAL ESTATE	19564 (58)	6671 (21)		3947 (11)	2182 (3)	1891 (3)	0
TOTAL CROP	33724	31763	30346	35570	67069	64115	11472

NOTE: The figure in brackets refers to the total tons of cane grown on the Estate as a percentage of the total yearly crop.

Source: As in Table 7.6.

were "moderate terms",⁹⁴ for they could secure between thirty and one hundred acres of agricultural land at a rental of 10s. per acre per annum for an initial term of seven years. Tenants were also entitled to lease grazing lands for their horse paddocks at 2s. per acre per annum. Drysdale Bros., unlike Australian Estates, also initially paid the local government rates on their leasehold farms, assisted the farmers by either providing horses and implements or erecting a dwelling, and arranged for their tenants to be levied for water obtained from Pioneer Estate's irrigation network at the rate of 6d. per ton of cane delivered to Pioneer Mill for crushing or made available an eight inch irrigation pump at a rental of £1 per day.⁹⁵ Finally, most of the settlers who secured leasehold farms on Pioneer Estate were not required to enter into a formal, written lease with Drysdale Bros. Like many of John Drysdale's business dealings, a verbal agreement was all that was required.⁹⁶

It appears that the terms offered by Drysdale Bros. were quite attractive to settlers. By 1908 tenants occupied farms on Pioneer Estate (excluding Maidavale) totalling nearly 1,500 acres. Most of these lessees were located at Dick's Bank or Home Estate. Four years later an additional 700 acres of Pioneer Estate had been rented to farmers (see Table 7.9). The majority of this land was situated at Klondyke on the three large blocks purchased by Drysdale Bros. in the early 1900s (see Figure 7.9). In addition, Drysdale Bros. by 1912 had placed settlers on just over 800 acres of Maidavale Estate (see Table 7.9). Most of these selectors occupied blocks with purchasing clauses; a few, however, were tenants of Drysdale Bros. Oddly enough, Drysdale Bros., after acquiring Maidavale from Australian Estates in 1905 for the stated purpose of

⁹⁴ H.G. Bell to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., Melbourne, 6 January 1906, K.M.A., Letterbook, 1897-1907, p. 401.

⁹⁵ Details on the terms offered to tenant farmers by Drysdale Bros. and Australian Estates were obtained from the following sources: Ayr Shire Council, Rate Books, 1906-1912; John Drysdale to M. O'Connor, Brandon, 23 February 1906, J.C.U., PMR/LB/30, p. 338; John Drysdale to Messrs. Sibson and Pyott, 1 September 1906, J.C.U., PMR/LB/31, p. 113; J.C.U., PMR/[C.T/1] Box 7, Articles 158-167: Memoranda of agreement between Drysdale Bros. and various farmers, 14 May 1906; N.Q.H., 12 April 1906, p. 6; and N.Q.H., 19 November 1910, pp. 40, 52.

⁹⁶ C.P.P., 2 (1911-1912): Ev. J. Drysdale, p. 1142, Q.1097.

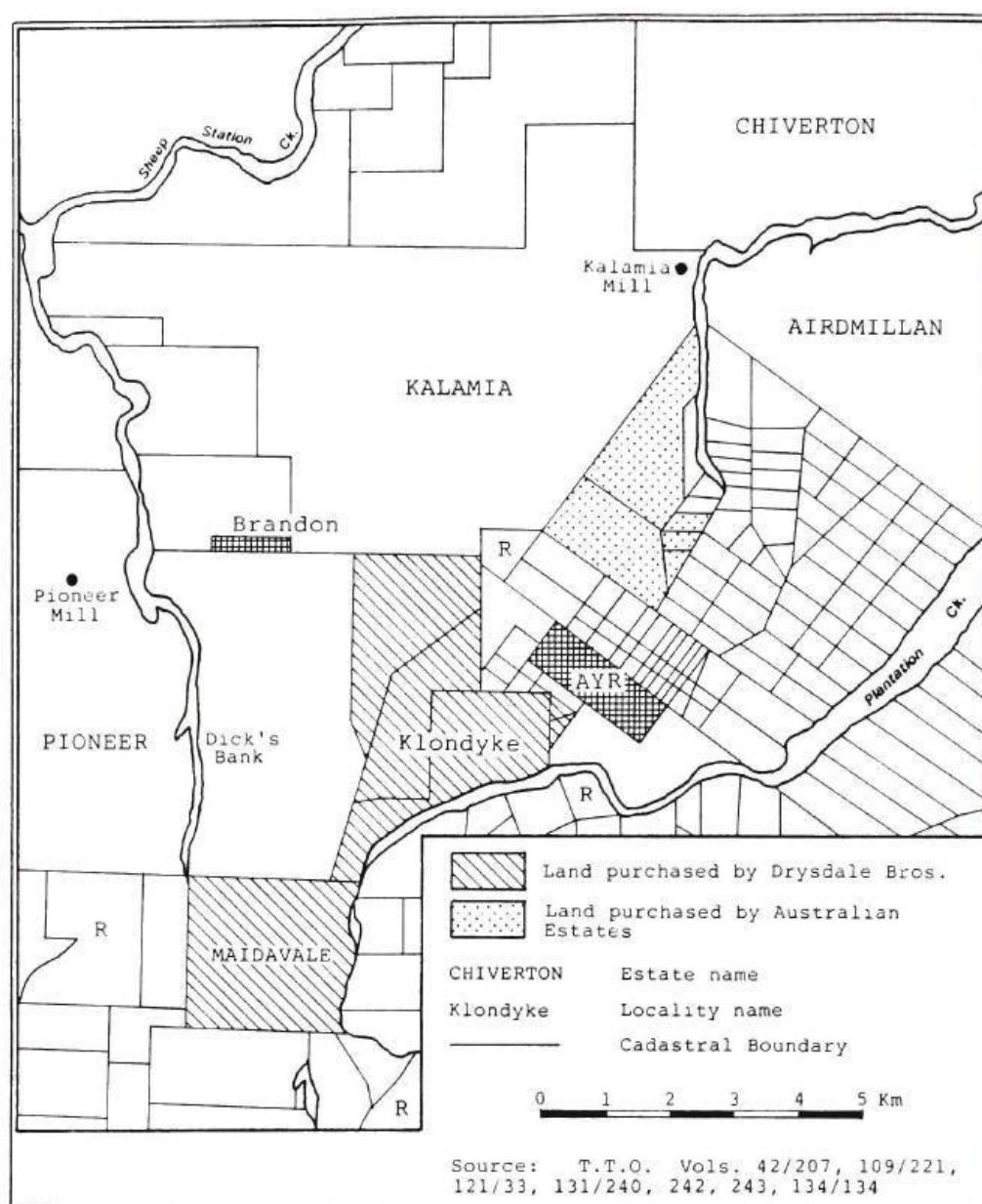


Figure 7.9 Land Purchased by Drysdale Bros. and Australian Estates on the Lower Burdekin, 1901 - 1908.

Table 7.9. Cumulative Acreage Leased by Drysdale Bros. to Tenants, 1905-1912

Locality	1905	1906	1907	1908	1909	1910	1911	1912
Home Estate	183	328	400	400	400	419	419	396
Dicks Bank	276	645	927	927	968	1118	1288	1228
Klondyke	0	144	144	144	144	144	400	649
Maidavale*	87	465	604	801	736	801	823	824
TOTAL	593	1572	2075	2272	2248	2482	2930	3097

* Also includes the acreage occupied by farmers who had a purchasing clause in their agreement.

Source: Based on J.C.U., PMR/DSB2, p. 387 (Particulars of Drysdale Bros. land leased in 1912) after consultation with J.C.U., PMR/[MISC/2] Box 11, Article 12, and P.M.B., Register of Pioneer Mill Growers, 1907-1914.

clearing the land for its firewood,⁹⁷ decided not to keep most of the block, but subdivided it into farms for sale. No reason was given for this course of action, but it is reasonable to assume that John Drysdale may have considered an additional fifteen to twenty tenants at Maidavale a burden that Drysdale Bros. were not prepared to carry, given that they would have between twenty-five and thirty tenants when their other estate lands were fully leased.

In contrast to the general ease with which Drysdale Bros. were able to lease their lands, Australian Estates in early 1906 had difficulty in attracting tenants.⁹⁸ This arose because the A.N.Z.M. Co. did not approve of the proposed substitution of a series of small farmers on its land at Airdmillan instead of the owners of Kalamia Estate. Also, it appears intending settlers were unwilling to enter into a sub-leasing arrangement with Australian Estates, when the A.N.Z.M. Co. still owned the land. Thus, Australian Estates in May 1906 was forced to purchase the 672 acres they leased from the A.N.Z.M. Co. at Airdmillan plus an additional three nearby blocks comprising 170 acres (see Figure 7.9). Once Australian Estates had purchased this land, John Drysdale had no problems in obtaining settlers willing to occupy the area. Six farmers by the end of June 1906 had taken up leases totalling 529 out of the 842 acres purchased by Australian Estates.⁹⁹ The remainder of the country acquired by Australian Estates was more suited to grazing and subsequently it was leased to Teitzel Bros., butchers at Ayr.¹⁰⁰

Who occupied the leasehold farms of Drysdale Bros. and Australian Estates in the late 1900s? Overwhelmingly, the majority of the seventy lessees between 1906 and 1912 were Anglo-Saxon; only six were non-Europeans. Of these six, four were Chinese, one was an Afghan and one was a Melanesian. It was also possible to determine that at least forty

⁹⁷ Sec., A.E.M. Co., Melbourne, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, 1 February 1905, M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book No. 10, p. 105. Firewood for the sugar mills on the Lower Burdekin became a problem in the early 1900s, so that in 1907 coal brought from Bowen began to be used as fuel for the factories (P.D.T., 11 June 1907).

⁹⁸ Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., Melbourne, 11 May 1906, A.N.U., Archives of Business and Labour, A.E.R., 165/139, Mail Letterbook No. 4, p. 22.

⁹⁹ Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., Melbourne, 26 June 1906, A.N.U., Archives of Business and Labour, A.E.R., 165/139, Mail Letterbook No. 4, p. 52.

¹⁰⁰ T.T.O., Vol. 143/151; Vol. 163/213.

per cent of the lessees were in some way already associated with the plantations, either as employees or previous tenants (see Appendix 3). This figure may have been higher, given that it was not possible to identify all the backgrounds of the lessees. Therefore, even though Drysdale Bros. and Australian Estates decided to cease sugar cultivation, they tried to ensure a reasonably safe supply of cane to their mills by selecting a majority of tenants who were known to them, presumably reliable and likely to be good farmers.

Why did Drysdale Bros. and Australian Estates decide to adopt a tenant farming system which maintained their administrative responsibility for collecting rent, resolving boundary disputes and ensuring that the tenants cared for the soil in such a way that it maintained its fertility? Firstly, it is reasonable to suggest that John Drysdale may have had a Scottish aversion to parting with the land once it had been purchased. Secondly, it was possible that the Lower Burdekin planters-cum-millers believed that the government's policy of creating a sugar industry worked by 'whites' would fail and that they would be required to grow their own cane again. Thirdly, by leasing the lands the millers could ensure that at least part of their cane supply was not threatened by the small farmers either switching from sugar-cane growing to other crops or deciding to supply another mill. Whatever the reasons, it appears Australian Estates and Drysdale Bros. encountered no problems in operating this arrangement in the late 1900s and beyond. This arose probably because they did not adopt the C.S.R. Co.'s Fijian policy of only leasing less than ten acres to its Indian tenants and rotating them to new land after two years.¹⁰¹ As mentioned earlier, the tenants of the Lower Burdekin planters-cum-millers in the late 1900s were able to lease up to one hundred acres of agricultural land, initially for seven years. They were true small growers, not just peasant agriculturists.

7.5.3 Expansion in the mills' catchment areas

In the early 1900s there was some fluctuation in the number of farmers supplying Pioneer and Kalamia Mills, but no change in the localities from where the mills obtained the cane grown by small farmers (see Tables 7.10 and 7.11). Kalamia Mill was still supplied by less than ten growers, mainly located at Airdmillan and on Kalamia Estate. The forty small farmers sending their cane to Pioneer Mill remained situated at Labatt Lagoon, Airville and Mirrigan. However, between 1906 and 1912

¹⁰¹ Moynagh, Brown or White?, pp. 82, 92.

Table 7.10. The Number of Suppliers per Locality in Pioneer Mill's Catchment Area, 1901-1912

Locality	1901	1902	1903	1904	1905	1906	1907	1908	1909	1910	1911	1912
Pioneer Estate	7	6	7	6	7	13	22	22	25	26	26	27
Labatt Lagoon	10	6	4	6	5	5	5	5	6	6	6	7
Colevale/Drynie	4	3	5	5	5	3	3	3	3	4	3	5
Airville	5	0	6	6	8	7	6	10	8	8	11	13
Maidavale ¹	2	2	1	3	4	6	5	12	14	14	15	11
Mirrigan	11	8	4	10	12	13	12	12	13	17	16	16
Macdesme/Jarvisfield	0	0	0	0	0	6	9	9	9	9	9	18
Houghton River	0	0	0	0	0	3	4	6	8	8	9	10
Other	1	0	0	0	1	2	2	2	2	1	3	4
Unknown	2	0	0	0	1	3	4	5	4	4	9	5
Total	42	25	27 ²	36	43	61	72	86	92	97	107	116

Notes: 1. Farmers were leasing their land from Drysdale Bros. from 1905 onwards.

2. Does not include seven Kalamia growers who had their crops crushed at Pioneer Mill.

Source: Constructed from the lists of Pioneer Mill's suppliers, 1901-1912, in J.C.U., PMB/[MISC/2] Box 11, Article 12, and P.M.B., Register of Pioneer Mill Growers, 1907-1914, after consultation with A.S.C., Rate Books, 1906-1912, and oral interviews.

Table 7.11. The Number of Suppliers per Locality in Kalamia Mill's Catchment Area, 1902-1912

Locality	1901	1902	1903	1904	1905	1906	1907	1908	1909	1910	1911	1912
Chiverton	1	1	1	1	1	4	5	-	4	4	4	4
Kalamia Estate (includes Seaforth)	2	3	2	3	3	3	9	-	10	10	10	10
Airdmillan	4	4	3	3	2	2	3	-	8	15	19	20
Ayr	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	-	3	4	6	4
Ivanhoe/Norham	0	0	1	1	1	1	3	-	6	14	17	18
Macesme/Jarvisfield	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	-	11	11	10	7
Mirrigan	1	1	0	1	1	1	3	-	2	3	3	2
Unknown	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	4	2	5	1
Total	8	9	7 ⁽¹⁾	9	8	12	29	38 ⁽²⁾	48	63	74	66

Notes: (1) Kalamia Mill suppliers sent their cane to Pioneer Mill for crushing in 1903.

(2) A detailed list of growers could not be located. The year's total was found in C.P.P., 4 (1913): Ev. P. Hoey, p. 1428, Q.7507.

Source: Constructed from the lists of Kalamia Mill suppliers, 1901-1912, found in K.M.A., Manager's Instructions and Memoranda Book, 1898-1901, p. 21, K.M.A., Manufacturer's Material Crushing Book for Sugar-Cane, 1902-1908, and K.M.A., Ledger Book, 1909-1915, pp. 65, 93, 281, after consultation with A.S.C., Rate Books, 1906-1912, and oral interviews.

there was a rapid increase in the number of farmers supplying both mills, resulting in expanded catchment areas for each factory.

The above changes were a consequence of the addition of new farmers to areas that already had suppliers sending their cane to the mills and the appearance of growers in new localities. In the case of Pioneer Mill, it received cane during this period for the first time from growers at Macdesme and in the Haughton River district and there was an increase in the number of farmers in some areas where suppliers of the factory had been situated previously (i.e. Airville, Maidavale, Pioneer Estate). Kalamia Mill received crops during the late 1900s for the first time from farmers at Norham, Jarvisfield, Ayr and Macdesme localities and there was an expansion in the number of growers situated at Airdmillan, Ivanhoe and Chiverton; areas where suppliers of Kalamia had been found since the late 1890s (see Tables 7.10 and 7.11; cf. Figure 7.10 and Figure 7.11).

The expansion in the number of growers in new and older localities on the Lower Burdekin in the late 1900s was related to the opening up of new land to settlement. However, it was not only the land openings, but the fact that many of the new selectors not on leased plantation lands willingly turned to growing sugar-cane. This occurred, not because of a lack of viable alternatives - maize, tobacco cultivation and dairying were successfully carried out on the Lower Burdekin in the mid-1900s¹⁰² - but according to John Drysdale because the farmers would not grow anything else but sugar-cane, although dissatisfied with the price they received for it.¹⁰³ Indeed, the unwillingness of the district's settlers to diversify led to the cessation of butter production at the Ayr Butter Factory by 1910, although it had only been established in 1904. This occurred because the district's farmers, according to the Inspector of Dairies, would not have anything to do with dairying as they found cane growing far more profitable.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² For details on dairying on the Lower Burdekin in the 1900s refer to Q.S.A., AGS/N297; N.Q.H., 20 July 1901, p. 48; N.Q.H., 6 February 1904, p. 40; P.D.T., 5 June 1906; N.Q.H., 26 January 1907, p. 53; and N.Q.H., 7 March 1908, p. 45.. For mention of tobacco growing in the district see P.D.T., 21 March 1908. Refer also to the Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture and Stock, 1902-1911, in Q.P.P.

¹⁰³ Q.P.P., 2 (1911-1912): Ev. J. Drysdale, p. 1146, Q.1115. For reference to farmer dissatisfaction with the price they received for cane see Q.P.P., 2 (1911-1912): Ev. A. Rutherford, p. 1435, Q.7702.

¹⁰⁴ Inspector Anderson to the Under Secretary, Department of Agriculture and Stock, 22 June 1910, Q.S.A., AGS/N297, In-letter 04859 of 1910 attached to In-letter 05099 of 1910.

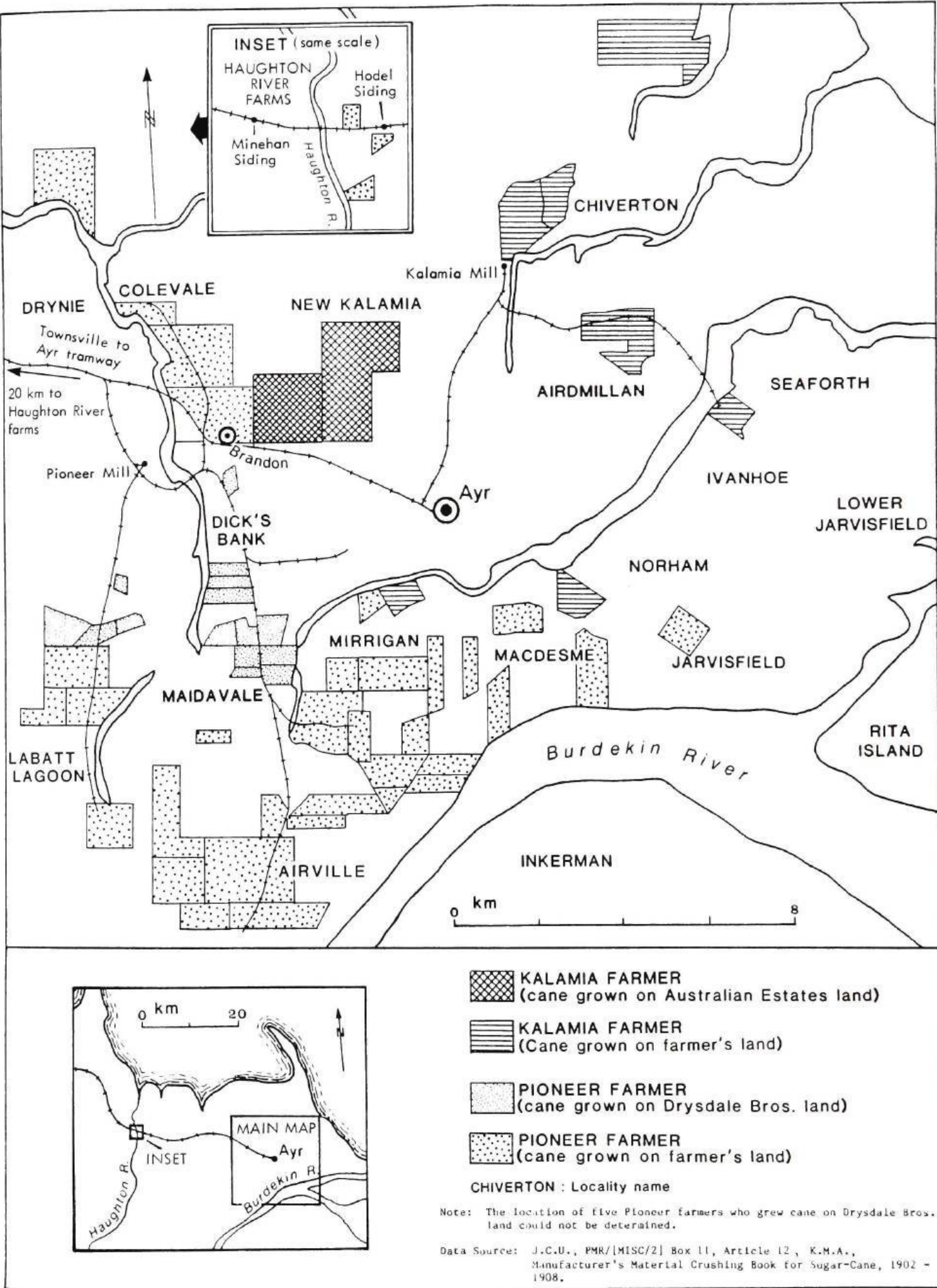


Figure 7.10 The Location of Farmers Supplying Pioneer and Kalamia Mills, 1906.

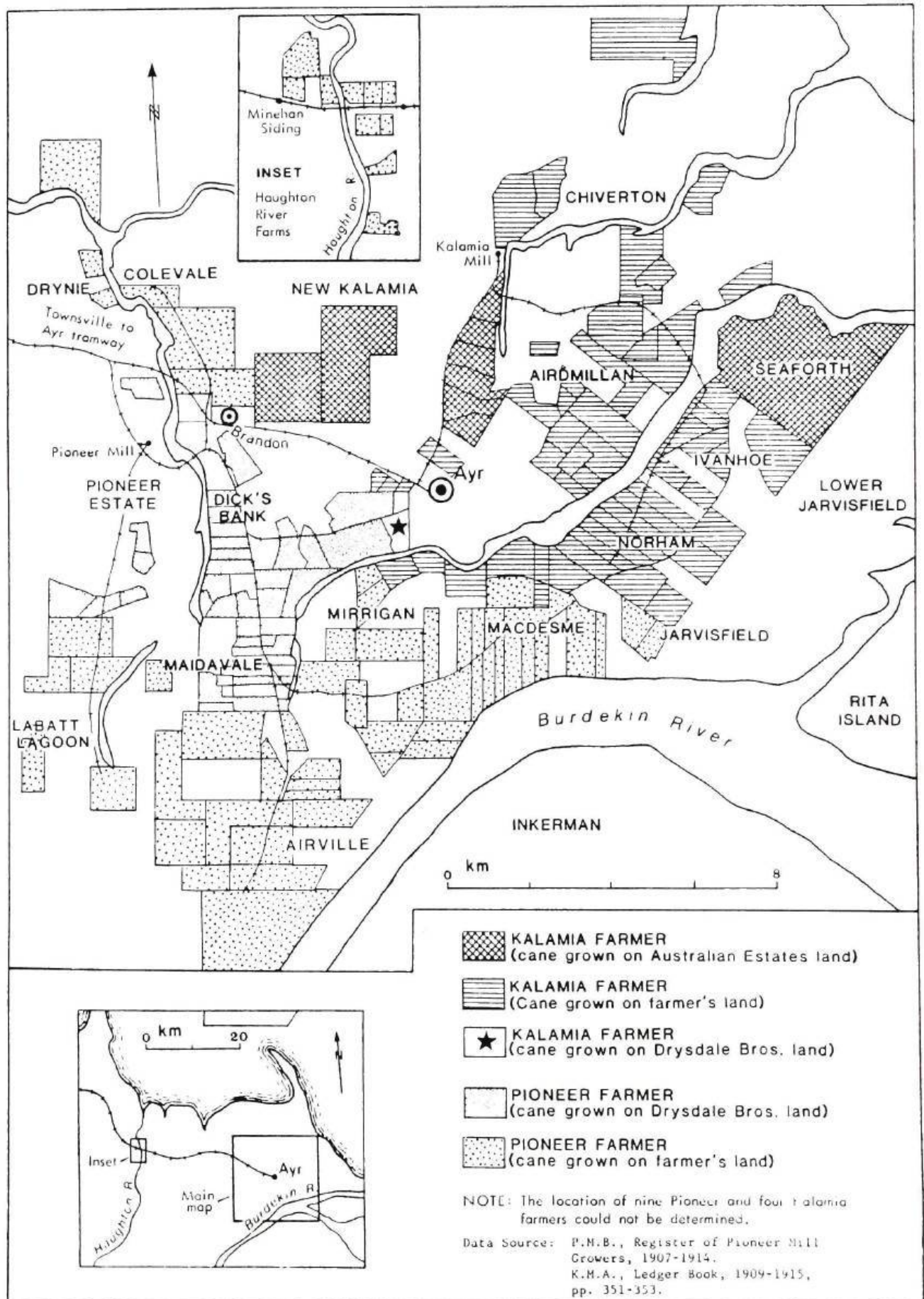


Figure 7.11 The Location of Farmers Supplying Pioneer and Kalamia Mills, 1912.

7.5.4 The Transition to 'White' Labourers, 1906-1912

The third major change to the Lower Burdekin sugar industry in the late 1900s was that European labourers replaced Melanesian workers in the canefields. As mentioned earlier, less than twenty per cent of the sugar-cane harvested on the Lower Burdekin between 1902 and 1905 was grown and cut by 'whites'. This reluctance to employ 'whites' was also accompanied by a concern about the future availability of 'white' workers for the sugar industry. The Lower Burdekin Farmers' Association representative at the Sugar Industry Labour Commission believed there would be a shortage of labour on the Lower Burdekin in a year or two, while W. Payard told the local press he thought there would not be sufficient workers to replace the departing Kanakas.¹⁰⁵ John Drysdale was also concerned about the possibility of a lack of sufficient labourers after 1906, for he is reported as making enquiries in Lisbon with a view to engaging Portuguese to work on his plantation.¹⁰⁶ In contrast, Charles Gray and Charles Howe, who both appeared before the Sugar Industry Labour Commission, believed there would be sufficient labour for the years ahead, particularly as there was a pool of unemployed miners who were willing to come from Charters Towers and Ravenswood to the Lower Burdekin to work in the cane fields.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, during 1906 it was reported that a Mr. J.R. Thomson was acting as an agent on the Lower Burdekin for the unemployed miners and had succeeded in placing several men from Charters Towers on farms in the district.¹⁰⁸

The Sugar Industry Labour Commission concluded that the fears expressed by the Lower Burdekin farmers concerning the future availability of 'white' workers were based on an absence of reliable information and that the change to small holdings also offered a partial solution to the labour problem.¹⁰⁹ This assessment was accurate, for despite the deportation of nearly 340 Melanesians from the Lower

¹⁰⁵ Q.P.P., 2 (1906): Ev. G.G. Kann, p. 843, Q.12812; N.Q.H., 19 March 1906, p. 50.

¹⁰⁶ Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., Melbourne, 26 January 1906, A.N.U., Archives of Business and Labour, A.E.R., 165/138, Mail Letterbook No. 3, p. 464.

¹⁰⁷ Q.P.P., 2 (1906): Ev. Charles Howe, p. 839, Q.12678; Ev. Charles Gray, p. 844, Q.12837.

¹⁰⁸ N.Q.R., 16 July 1906, p. 54.

¹⁰⁹ Q.P.P. 2 (1906): 460.

Burdekin in early 1907,¹¹⁰ there were sufficient 'white' workers to ensure at least eighty per cent of the district's cane between 1908 and 1910 was harvested by Europeans (see Table 7.12). Indeed, in 1911 Peter Hoey on behalf of the Lower Burdekin Farmers' Association advised the Royal Commission into the Sugar Industry that to the end of 1910 the quality and quantity of 'white' labourers in the district had "annually improved".¹¹¹ Similarly, the Melbourne Office of Australian Estates informed its London headquarters that the 'white' labour which was available was of a superior class and its success was assured in the district.¹¹²

Table 7.12: The Tons of Cane Harvested by 'Black' and 'White' Labourers on the Lower Burdekin, 1908-1910

	'White' Labourers		'Black' Labourers	
	Number of Growers	Tons	Number of Growers	Tons
1908	109	104236 (82)	15	22837 (18)
1909	129	88900 (83)	14	18497 (17)
1910	153	115068 (87)	13	17730 (13)

NOTE: The figure in brackets refers to the tons of cane grown and harvested either by 'white' or black' labourers as a percentage of the total amount of cane harvested that year.

Source: C.P.P., 4 (1913): Ev. P. Hoey, p. 1428, Q.7507.

Even though most of the growers on the Lower Burdekin after 1906 were European and cultivated their sugar crops using 'white' labourers, a few farmers were recorded as using 'black' labourers. Most of these farmers were Asiatics, barred from receiving the bounty even if they employed 'white' labourers.¹¹³ However, Drysdale Bros. in the late 1900s also continued to employ Chinese and Melanesians with tickets of exemptions to harvest the last of their estate grown crops.¹¹⁴ Indeed,

¹¹⁰ Q.P.P., 2 (1906): Appendix XVIII, p. 904.

¹¹¹ C.P.P., 4 (1913): Ev. P. Hoey, p. 1427, Q.7507.

¹¹² Sec., A.E.M. Co., Melbourne, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, 7 April 1910, M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book No. 3, p. 303.

¹¹³ Section 4 of The Sugar Bounty Act of 1905 stated that the owner or lessee of a sugar plantation was deemed to be employed in sugar production.

¹¹⁴ For details on Melanesians and Chinese employed by Drysdale Bros. in the late 1900s see J.C.U., PMR/CJ3, CJ4 and WB/2.

descendants of some of the one hundred Melanesians who were not deported from the Lower Burdekin still reside in the district today.¹¹⁵

Before 1910 the change to the use of 'white' labourers as the predominant workers in the sugar industry on the Lower Burdekin had occurred without major problems. However, as mentioned earlier the campaign to improve the conditions of the 'white' sugar workers culminated in the 1911 strike. For three months the Lower Burdekin sugar workers and their colleagues throughout Queensland withheld their labour. The Lower Burdekin farmers, assisted by free labourers brought to the district by Drysdale Bros. from southern Queensland, harvested the cane and managed to keep the mills crushing, usually for at least one shift a day.¹¹⁶ This stance by the millers and farmers resulted on several occasions in violent melees as the strikers tried to stop the free workers from reaching the mills.¹¹⁷ Fires were also lit on various farms, including one on John Drysdale's property at Kilrie.¹¹⁸ Eventually, however, the strike ended when the wages for mill workers were raised. A year later, as mentioned in the introduction, wages for farm labourers were also increased.

Up until the late 1900s sugar-cane cultivation on the Lower Burdekin was labour intensive. Indeed, John Drysdale advised the Royal Commission into the Sugar Industry in 1912 that he did not know of any Lower Burdekin farmers who did not have to employ workers to either assist in growing or harvesting their crops.¹¹⁹ However, in response to the loss of cheap Melanesian workers and the rising costs associated with employing 'whites', the Lower Burdekin farmers in the late 1900s and early 1910s began using labour saving machinery such as tractors and the

¹¹⁵ Q.P.P., 2 (1906): Appendix XVII, p. 903; Patricia Mercer, "The Survival of a Pacific Islander Population in North Queensland, 1900-1940", Ph.D. thesis, J.C.U., 1981, *passim*.

¹¹⁶ N.Q.R., 19 June 1911, p. 39; John Drysdale to E. Knox, Sydney, 27 June 1911, J.C.U., PMR/LB/37, p. 71; N.Q.R., 3 July 1911, p. 53; Sec., A.E.M. Co., Melbourne, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book No. 15, p. 433; N.Q.R., 14 August 1911, p. 93.

¹¹⁷ Reports of Inspector John Quilter, Ayr, to the Commissioner of Police, Brisbane, 17 July 1911, 21 July 1911, 25 July 1911, 9 August 1911, 13 August 1911, Q.S.A., POL 11/62.

¹¹⁸ N.Q.R., 17 July 1911, p. 86.

¹¹⁹ C.P.P., 4 (1913): Ev. J. Drysdale, p. 1422, Q.7293.

'drop' planter¹²⁰ (cf. Plate 13 and Plate 14). In addition, the number of men needed to load cane onto tramway trucks was reduced by the introduction of overhead derricks and gantries,¹²¹ [cf. Plate 8 and Plate 15(a) and 15(b)] and the steam engines used to drive the pumps used in irrigation were replaced increasingly after 1908 by suction gas engines, which did not require feeding so often, cost less in fuel consumption and did not have to be attended on a full time basis by a labourer.¹²²

7.5.5 Overview

Australian Estates' and Drysdale Bros.' decision to end large scale cultivation of sugar-cane after 1906 and the substitution of cheap, Melanesian workers with more expensive European labour did not lead to any reduction in the area cultivated with the crop on the Lower Burdekin in the late 1900s (see Table 7.2). This occurred because of two reasons: first, the estate lands were leased to tenant farmers and new settlers also began cane cultivation; and second, there was a good supply of 'white' workers skilled in the tasks required by the farmers. However, the conditions and wages demanded by 'white' labourers led quickly to the introduction of labour saving machinery, while the increase in the area under cane, as will be seen in the next section, resulted in renewed attempts by the farmers to improve the district's milling facilities.

7.6 THE SECOND ATTEMPT TO ESTABLISH THE JARVISFIELD CENTRAL MILL

In the early 1900s the Lower Burdekin planter-cum-millers continued to exercise considerable control over the district's farmers, for they determined which mill a grower supplied, the price paid for their cane, the variety of canes that should be cultivated and supplied much of the

¹²⁰ A.S.J., 4 April 1912, p. 49; E.E. Scriven, "Annual Report of the B.S.E.S., 1912", Q.P.P., 3 (1913): 371; N.Q.R., 1 June 1914, p. 56.

¹²¹ N.Q.H., 19 November 1910, p. 50.

¹²² A suction gas plant was basically a furnace in which the air supply was restricted to a glowing bed of carbon (coke or charcoal) so that carbon monoxide was produced. Steam was added to the furnace converting the carbon monoxide to hydrogen. The gases from the furnace were then suitable as fuel to drive the irrigation pumps. (pers. comm., the late Mr. D. Haigh, former Burdekin Shire Council Engineer.) For further details see A.S.J., 9 December 1909, p. 326, and N.Q.H., 19 November 1910, p. 41.



Plate 13 Hand planting on the Lower Burdekin, 1910
 Four men could usually hand plant one acre a day.
 Photo: A.S.J., 7 July 1910, p.144



Plate 14 A drop planter or cane planting machine, 1920.
 Such devices were used on the Lower Burdekin from the
 early 1910s onwards. Two men using a drop planter could
 normally plant 3-4 acres a day.
 Photo: Courtesy of Mr. A. Berryman, Home Hill.

(a)



(b)



Plate 15 (a) An overhead derrick at Hodel Siding, 1911
 (b) An overhead gantry at Poopoonbah Siding, c. 1920
 Normally it required only one or two men to load wagons
 of cane using derricks and ganties.
 Photos: A.S.S., 6 April 1911, p. 27, and Mr. Jack (Digger)
 Humphrey, Ayr.

finance needed by the growers.¹²³ However, John Drysdale sought to expand this control in 1908 and 1909 by restricting the amount the farmers could grow. Furthermore, no guarantee would be given to any new growers that their cane would be crushed at either of the mills.¹²⁴ This attempt to control the district's annual harvests arose because it was known that the mills would be unable to handle the increased amounts that were being grown. Contrary to the belief of some Lower Burdekin farmers,¹²⁵ the industry did not fail after the deportation of Melanesians, but expanded so that the yearly production threatened to outstrip the capacity of the district's two mills.

The limited capacity of the two Lower Burdekin mills was reported in 1906, when it was noted that the factories would soon be unable to handle all the farmers' crops.¹²⁶ Australian Estates, aware of this problem had started a modest updating and expansion at Kalamia. Two rakes were installed in 1906, not only to speed up the unloading of cane at the mill but in order to reduce labour costs (cf. Plate 16 and Plate 17), and in 1907 a new crushing mill, Babcock boiler and four centrifugals were added to the mill's machinery and the factory's tramway system extended to Norham.¹²⁷ Despite these improvements, John Drysdale advised Australian Estates in 1908 that within a couple of years he anticipated that their factory would have difficulty in "overtaking the quantity of cane available" from its suppliers.¹²⁸

In contrast to the improvements undertaken at Kalamia, John Drysdale made no attempts in 1906 or 1907 to improve the capacity of

¹²³ For reference to the debts owed by the Lower Burdekin farmers to the millers see P.M.B., Pioneer Estate's Annual Balance Sheets, 1902-1912 and K.M.A., Ledger Book, 1909-1915, p. 58.

¹²⁴ P.D.T., 21 March 1908; N.Q.R., 4 July 1909, p. 76; N.Q.H., 11 September 1909, p. 41; Q.P.P. 2 (1911-1912): Ev. W. Payard, p. 1139, Q.1053, Ev. M. Coyne, p. 1139, Q.1059; Ev. A. Dean, p. 1140, Q.1066; Ev. J. Drysdale, p. 1141, Q.1087.

¹²⁵ N.Q.H., 23 January 1904, p. 34; N.Q.H., 30 January 1904, p. 39.

¹²⁶ N.Q.H., 28 May 1906, p. 60.

¹²⁷ Sec., A.E.M. Co., Melbourne, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, 23 May 1906, M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book No. 11, p. 93; Sec., A.E.M. Co., Melbourne, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, 5 February 1908, M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book, No. 12, p. 381; H.G. Bell to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., 2 July 1907, K.M.A., Ledger Book, 1905-1909, p. 479.

¹²⁸ Sec., A.E.M. Co., Melbourne, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, 6 May 1908, M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book No. 13, p. 46.



Plate 16 Melanesians unloading cane from Pioneer Mill, c. 1888. Around ten to fifteen Melanesians were required to unload the cane from wagons and manually feed it into a mill's crushing rollers.

Photo: Courtesy of John Oxley Library.



Plate 17 Rakes working to unload cane at Pioneer Mill. Date unknown. The installation of such devices meant cane was mechanically unloaded into a carrier which took it to the mill's crushing rollers. Consequently, between three and five men only were required to control the unloading of a mill's cane, compared to double the number of Melanesians who undertook such a task before the introduction of the rakes.

Photo: Courtesy of Mr. W. Wiseman, Redcliffe.

Pioneer Mill to handle the predicted expansion. However, his policy caused problems, for early in 1908 a deputation of farmers met John Drysdale and asked him to improve his milling capacity. John Drysdale stated he had no intention of increasing his milling power as he was "too old" and it was not worth the "risk, money or trouble".¹²⁹ Receiving no satisfaction, thirty-four farmers formed the Macdesme Co-operative Mill Association, offering as security their land holdings which totalled 6,277 acres valued at £53,885.¹³⁰

The main supporters of the Macdesme Co-operative Mill Association were the new growers in the Macdesme locality. They sought to erect a farmers' mill at Macdesme and in doing so to provide some opposition to the established millers, who, according to the growers, worked in combination by paying the same prices for cane.¹³¹ In mid-1908 the Association's spokesman, Mr. M. McMahon, accompanied by representatives of the Lower Burdekin Farmers' Association, interviewed two Ministers in the Queensland Government who were visiting the Ayr district about the possibility of government support for the scheme.¹³² Even though the two Ministers made no promises to their petitioners, the possibility that the farmers could some time in the future obtain government support for their plan must have influenced John Drysdale. Late in 1908 he told the Macdesme farmers he was willing to extend Pioneer Mill's tramline eastwards for approximately one and a half miles into the Macdesme locality and advance 1s. per ton on the price of cane. The supporters of the Macdesme Co-operative Mill Scheme accepted this proposal, undoubtedly seeing it as a reasonable compromise. The Macdesme farmers no longer had to bear the cost of carting their cane to Pioneer Mill's last tramway siding at Mirrigan and growers received an extra 1s. per ton for their cane.¹³³ Agitation for the Macdesme Mill ceased, although John Drysdale still had not increased the capacity of Pioneer Mill to handle the extra cane.

¹²⁹ N.Q.R., 22 April 1912, p. 32.

¹³⁰ N.Q.H., 1 August 1908, p. 11.

¹³¹ C.P.P., 4 (1913): Ev. A. Rutherford, p. 1435, Q.7702. The claim that the millers worked in combination is not entirely correct, for Drysdale Bros. in 1903 and 1904 gave a bonus of 2s. on every ton of cane delivered by a grower to Pioneer Mill (N.Q.H., 16 January 1904, p. 34; N.Q.H., 28 January 1905, p. 33).

¹³² N.Q.H., 25 July 1908, p. 63; N.Q.R., 3 August 1908, p. 40.

¹³³ C.P.P., 4 (1913): Ev. A. Rutherford, p. 1435, Q.7702.

Drysdale Bros.' concessions to the Macdesme farmers obviously satisfied them for only one year, because in early 1910 they again approached the Kidston Government about the possibility of a central mill being erected at Jarvisfield. However, they were informed that no new central mills in Queensland would be erected at this stage.¹³⁴ The growers turned to the C.S.R. Co. for assistance and despite the Manager of the C.S.R. Co.'s Macnade Mill visiting the district, nothing eventuated from these negotiations.¹³⁵ Meetings of farmers interested in establishing a third mill in the district continued throughout 1910 and resulted in the Jarvisfield Sugar Co. Ltd. being formed late in the year.¹³⁶

Requests for a new mill on the Lower Burdekin were not isolated occurrences in the late 1900s. The Queensland Government at this time received deputations from farmers in Central Queensland, at Babinda and on the Johnstone River about the possibility of building new mills in their districts.¹³⁷ As a means of dealing with the numerous applications to erect new mills, the Queensland Government in November 1910 appointed a Royal Commission to examine if it was advisable to construct further sugar mills in the state and in what locations should these factories be established. Thus, during early 1911 the Royal Commissioners looked at twenty places in Queensland as possible sites to locate further sugar mills. The Jarvisfield-Macdesme area was one of the sites considered by the Royal Commission.

At the Lower Burdekin hearings of the above Royal Commission, the farmers' committee elected to investigate the establishment of the Jarvisfield Central Mill asked for a mill that could produce 10,000 tons of sugar a year to be built on part of the N.A.P.C.'s property at Jarvisfield (see Figure 7.2). This mill would be supplied initially by 1,160 acres of cane diverted from going to Pioneer Mill and 953 acres of cane withdrawn from Kalamia Mill's supply. There is little wonder John Drysdale objected so strongly to the scheme. His mill was to lose the supply of nearly 1,200 acres of cane.

¹³⁴ N.Q.R., 13 December 1909, p. 93; N.Q.H., 15 January 1910, p. 12.

¹³⁵ N.Q.R., 24 January 1910, p. 6.

¹³⁶ N.Q.H., 23 April 1910, p. 11; N.Q.H., 6 August 1910, p. 26; N.Q.H., 29 October 1910, p. 62; Q.S.A., A/18942, p. 296.

¹³⁷ A.S.J., 4 August 1910, p. 186; A.S.J., 8 September 1910, p. 229; A.S.J., 8 November 1910, pp. 365-366.

After discussing the capacity of the mill required by the farmers, the Royal Commissioners questioned the Committee about assets. The growers told the Royal Commission that the Jarvisfield Sugar Co. Ltd. offered £20,000 as security, raised from the sale of 20,000 of the 40,000 shares issued to form the Company. Finally, the gentlemen who were being interviewed by the Royal Commission on behalf of the Jarvisfield Sugar Co. Ltd. stated that they thought the building of a mill at Inkerman would not affect the Jarvisfield Mill, as it would be very inconvenient for farmers on that side of the river to send their cane across the river to the Jarvisfield Mill.¹³⁸

John Drysdale when interviewed by the Royal Commission stated there was no need for a mill at Jarvisfield as he was planning to increase the evaporating power at Kalamia Mill and preparing to install a new vacuum pan at Pioneer Mill. This would allow both mills to handle greater supplies of cane. More importantly, however, John Drysdale stated he had entered into an agreement with the government to build at Inkerman a mill which could initially produce 15,000 tons of sugar a year. The sugar-cane at Jarvisfield would be transported to the Inkerman Mill across the proposed Burdekin Railway Bridge that would be built when Ayr was linked by rail to Bobawaba. Finally, Drysdale told the Commission that:

he knew it was a sore point with some of the farmers that they could not put in more cane, but they were all doing very well. New settlers could not put in more cane, because it was no use having too much. They had never had any standing cane yet. There might have been some cases in Kalamia where people had been refused permission to put in cane, but at Pioneer they had never stopped anyone.¹³⁹

This latter statement brought an angry response from the Secretary of the Jarvisfield Sugar Co. Ltd., Albert Dean, who wrote to the North Queensland Register claiming that:

We can if necessary quote several concrete instances of where farmers have been stopped by the Pioneer management from growing further cane and no doubt if systematic inquiries were made, many more cases would be found.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ Details on the Jarvisfield Mill proposal were summarised from the evidence of Messrs. Arthur Rutherford, William Duggan, Harry Cox, Michael Coyne and Albert Dean in Q.P.P., 2 (1911-12): pp. 1134-1140, Qs. 989-1066.

¹³⁹ N.Q.R., 23 January 1911, p. 87.

¹⁴⁰ N.Q.R., 6 February 1911, p. 95.

After hearing all the evidence throughout Queensland on places to establish further mills, the Royal Commission recommended that two mills - one at Babinda Creek and the other on the Johnstone River - should be built in readiness for the 1913 season, and that if before 31 December 1911 no definite assurance had been received by the Government that a sugar mill would be constructed at Inkerman, then a third factory of 5,000 tons of sugar capacity be built at Jarvisfield.¹⁴¹ Connolly states that the recommendation concerning Jarvisfield was, in the circumstances, unrealistic.¹⁴² This claim probably is correct, for as mentioned earlier, the Queensland Government on purchasing the Inkerman Estate from the N.A.P.C. had also taken over the contract between John Drysdale who agreed to build a mill at Inkerman in return for a land grant from the N.A.P.C.

Once the recommendations of the Royal Commission had been made public, John Drysdale moved quickly to end the attempt by the farmers to establish another mill. In mid April 1911 he sent a circular to all farmers asking if they were willing to contract to supply either Pioneer or Kalamia Mill for the next ten years. The price to be paid for their cane was to be based on a sliding scale. When the price of raw sugar was at £12 a ton the mills would pay 16s. 6d. per ton for cane loaded onto the company's trucks. For every shilling rise in the price of raw sugar, one penny would be added to the price of cane, and for every shilling fall, one penny would be deducted.¹⁴³

The aim of this move by John Drysdale was obviously to force the supporters of the Jarvisfield Mill proposal to supply either Kalamia or Pioneer Mill, thus ending their freedom to cease supplying either mill in favour of the Jarvisfield Mill. Between 1908 and 1910 there were no contracts with the mills, except that growers had to give the management at Pioneer or Kalamia one season's notice if they intended changing the mill they supplied.¹⁴⁴ As an inducement to the farmers to sign the agreement, the sliding scale of prices for cane would be substantially

¹⁴¹ R.A. Ranking et al., "Report of the Royal Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Advisability of Erecting Central Mills at Certain Places in Queensland", Q.P.P., 2 (1911-1912): 1043.

¹⁴² Connolly, John Drysdale and the Burdekin, p. 126.

¹⁴³ C.P.P., 4 (1913): Ev. J. Drysdale, p. 1417, Q.7170.

¹⁴⁴ N.Q.R., 23 January 1911, p. 95.

higher than the 13s. the farmers had been receiving since the 1908 agreement, when Drysdale Bros. and Australian Estates agreed to maintain cane values for a term of five years.¹⁴⁵

Initially the Farmers' Association objected to such an agreement, saying that a contract for ten years was too long and that before any farmer signed they required 16s. per ton to be paid for their cane during the 1911 season.¹⁴⁶ In response to the farmers' request, John Drysdale agreed to offer the growers a five year contract to supply cane to the existing mills until 1915, with the increased price beginning in 1911. A number of farmers agreed to sign this contract, except for those who supported the Jarvisfield scheme.¹⁴⁷

The agitators for a new mill on the Lower Burdekin continued to believe the Denham Government would approve of their scheme. Throughout the remainder of 1911 the Jarvisfield Mill supporters met with the Premier of Queensland to discuss their plans once again, began negotiations to purchase machinery for the factory and increased the capital of their company to £70,000 by issuing further shares which were open to the general public to purchase.¹⁴⁸ Despite their efforts they achieved little, except for a promise from the Premier of Queensland who told the Parliament that if circumstances demand it the Government would favourably consider any representations which the Jarvisfield farmers may make.¹⁴⁹

Once the 1911 season concluded John Drysdale issued a further circular which offered the Jarvisfield Mill supporters and any others who had not signed the agreement another chance to sign the contracts.¹⁵⁰ The Jarvisfield Mill supporters maintained their refusal to sign Drysdale's agreements and in a last effort to win support for their scheme called a public meeting in Ayr to discuss the matter. Over 200 attended this gathering which elected delegates to deliver to the Premier a petition signed by 400 Lower Burdekin residents calling for the establishment of

¹⁴⁵ N.Q.H., 27 May 1911, p. 23.

¹⁴⁶ N.Q.H., 29 April 1911, p. 40.

¹⁴⁷ C.P.P., 4 (1913): Ev. A. Rutherford, p. 1435, Q.7702.

¹⁴⁸ N.Q.H., 27 May 1911, p. 23.

¹⁴⁹ N.Q.R., 18 December 1911, n.pag.

¹⁵⁰ N.Q.R., 22 April 1912, p. 32.

the Jarvisfield Mill.¹⁵¹ John Drysdale responded to this move by issuing another letter in early April 1912 stating that the last offer would be withdrawn on April 8, the day the Premier of Queensland arrived in Townsville to begin an election tour of the North.¹⁵² When John Drysdale's deadline had passed, thirty-nine farmers, led by Peter Hoey, had refused to signed the agreement.¹⁵³

Nine days after John Drysdale's deadline had passed the Premier of Queensland visited Ayr. He was met by a deputation of thirty cane growers who placed before him the petition signed at the above meeting. Once again they asked for government assistance in building the Jarvisfield Mill. Premier Denham, addressing this deputation, stated he had "an inclination towards the Jarvisfield Mill" and that he would give them a firm answer after the election.¹⁵⁴

Denham's government was re-elected, but the farmers on the Lower Burdekin received no immediate assurance that their mill would be built. A Government Engineer visited the Lower Burdekin in August 1912 and inspected the site for the Jarvisfield Mill,¹⁵⁵ although his presence did not ensure the assistance that was required for the mill was forthcoming from the government. Indeed, already Drysdale's machinery for the Inkerman Mill was being built in Glasgow¹⁵⁶ and in early 1913 it began to be assembled at Inkerman.

Denham visited the Lower Burdekin again in May 1913. He was waited upon by another deputation from the shareholders in the Jarvisfield Mill Company. The government was accused of stalling on the issue, although Denham replied that the £37,000 asked for was available, but it was the farmers who had failed to find their money for the scheme. Several of the deputation complained they were unable to obtain the money because of the unequal prices they were being paid for their sugar cane as a result of their failure to sign Drysdale Bros.' agreement.

¹⁵¹ N.Q.R., 15 January 1912, p. 26.

¹⁵² N.Q.R., 22 April 1912, p. 32; John Drysdale to T. Jones, Pioneer Estate, 3 April 1912, J.C.U., PMB/LB/38, p. 125.

¹⁵³ Connolly, John Drysdale and the Burdekin, p. 134.

¹⁵⁴ A.S.J., 9 May 1912, p. 81.

¹⁵⁵ N.Q.R., 19 August 1912, p. 24.

¹⁵⁶ N.Q.R., 2 September 1912, p. 35.

The meeting ended without any firm promises from either side being undertaken.¹⁵⁷

The outcome of Denham's visit was that three months later the State Treasurer, W.H. Barnes, visited the Lower Burdekin in an attempt to solve the issue.¹⁵⁸ Barnes was able to negotiate an agreement between Drysdale Bros. and the Jarvisfield farmers who had not signed the agreement. The growers were to receive back pay for their sugar-cane which had been accepted at a lower price by Drysdale Bros. and were to be paid the full amount for their cane during the 1913 season. In return for the price concessions and the willingness of Drysdale Bros. to extend their tramline into the Jarvisfield lands, the supporters of the Jarvisfield Mill agreed not to proceed with their scheme. They liquidated the Jarvisfield Sugar Co. Ltd. in December 1913.¹⁵⁹

As a result of the farmers' failure to establish a mill at Jarvisfield, Drysdale Bros. continued to dominate the industry. In fact their position was considerably strengthened, for most of the Macdesme-Jarvisfield lands were incorporated into Pioneer Mill's catchment area by 1912. On the other hand, John Drysdale's image suffered during this attempt by the growers to erect the Jarvisfield Mill. Although Connolly claims that John Drysdale was never vindictive,¹⁶⁰ two farmers questioned during the Royal Commission into the Sugar Industry in late 1911 stated he had used coercion to prevent the Jarvisfield Mill from being established. According to their evidence, John Drysdale threatened several growers that if they did not sign the agreement to supply either Kalamia or Pioneer Mill at the prices on the sliding scale, he would refuse to take any further cane from them in the future, and even if the farmer sold his farm he would not take cane from that property.¹⁶¹ These tactics undoubtedly did little to promote a harmonious relationship between the growing number of farmers and the district's millers. Indeed, the strained relationship which developed between the farmers and millers on the Lower Burdekin by the late 1900s continued throughout the following decade.

¹⁵⁷ N.Q.R., 12 May 1913, p. 25.

¹⁵⁸ Brisbane Courier, 29 July 1913, p. 7.

¹⁵⁹ N.Q.R., 8 December 1913, p. 137.

¹⁶⁰ Connolly, John Drysdale and the Burdekin, p. 134.

¹⁶¹ C.P.P., 4 (1913): Ev. A. Rutherford, p. 1436, Qs.7720-7721; Ev. W. Duggan, p. 1440, Q.7838.

7.7 IRRIGATION IN THE 1900s

In 1901 sixty per cent of the acreage under irrigation in Queensland was located on the Lower Burdekin, but in 1902 and 1903, less than thirty per cent of the State's irrigated acreage was situated on the delta (see Table 7.13). This situation arose due to the severe drought in 1902 which resulted in a doubling of the area irrigated in Queensland, although it caused only a minor increase in the acreage irrigated on the Lower Burdekin. However, after 1903 the total acreage irrigated in Queensland began to decline, while the area irrigated on the Lower Burdekin slowly rose. This trend resulted in a return to the late 1890s situation of over fifty per cent of the acreage irrigated in Queensland being located on the Lower Burdekin.

The growth in the area under irrigation on the Lower Burdekin in the 1900s was undoubtedly related to the steady increase in the number of irrigators in the district (see Table 7.13). New farmers most likely were advised by the millers that irrigation was the fundamental principle of cane growing in a light rainfall region like the Lower Burdekin. Indeed, Drysdale Bros. in the early 1900s supplied Chinese and Melanesians to farmers to help supervise irrigation engines or to cut firewood for the steam plants that provided power to the engines.¹⁶² However, reference to Table 7.13 shows that there were always fewer irrigators than suppliers to both mills during the 1900s, indicating that some growers may not have heeded the millers' advice. Two main reasons can be advanced to explain this situation: first, several farmers in this period grew only small acreages, so they may have decided not to invest in irrigation equipment; and second, it was costly to install and maintain such facilities.¹⁶³ Despite the importance of irrigation, some of the district's struggling farmers may not have been able to afford it.

During the 1900s there was an improvement in the understanding of the scientific principles associated with irrigation. Dr. Walter Maxwell, Director of the B.S.E.S., visited the Lower Burdekin in October 1903 to assess the irrigation practices in the district. He found that on Pioneer plantation there had been damage done to some fields through the application of vast quantities of water. Drysdale Bros. were advised not

¹⁶² See J.C.U., PMR/JA4, passim; N.Q.H., 17 May 1902, p. 12.

¹⁶³ Q.P.P., 2 (1906): Ev. G. Campbell, p. 847, Q.12980.

Table 7.13. Irrigation Statistics for the Lower Burdekin,
1902-1912

	Acres Under Irrigation Lower Burdekin	Acres Under Irrigation Queensland	Number of Irrigators Lower Burdekin	Number of Farmers Who Supplied the Mills
1901	3896 (60)*	6526	30	50
1902	4070 (28)	14344	32	36
1903	3622 (24)	14786	30	36
1904	4334 (32)	13360	33	47
1905	4678 (34)	13693	35	51
1906	4978 (50)	9922	57	72
1907	4492 (47)	9612	75	103
1908	4574 (55)	8247	78	124
1909	5547 (65)	8470	94	141
1910	5150 (64)	8007	106	150
1911	3658 (43)	8661	82	166
1912	5590 (59)	9420	121	185

*NOTE: The figure in brackets refers to the acres under irrigation on the Lower Burdekin as a percentage of the acres under irrigation in Queensland.

Source: Calculated on the basis of figures provided in the Annual Reports of the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Stock, 1902-1913, in Q.P.P.

to irrigate with so much water or as often.¹⁶⁴ This principle was undoubtedly relayed to the farmers by John Drysdale, who was always eager to improve irrigation techniques. The need to irrigate only sparingly during the season was reinforced when Harry Easterby, Assistant Director of the B.S.E.S., visited the district in June 1910 and addressed a group of farmers about irrigation practices.¹⁶⁵

In 1887 it was noted that Imperial Rose Bamboo, Big Tanna, Meera, Black Java and Striped Mauritius were the main cane varieties grown on the Lower Burdekin. A newspaper report in 1901 still recorded Rose Bamboo, Meera and Striped Mauritius as the principal canes grown on the delta.¹⁶⁶ It is reasonable to assume that such cane varieties had not been displaced in 1906 and 1907 when the B.S.E.S. distributed new varieties of cane such as New Guinea 8A, Mauritius Bois Range, Goru, Badila and Trinidad Seedling throughout the sugar-cane growing regions in Queensland. On the Lower Burdekin, many of the trials on the new cane varieties were carried on the farm of George McKersie, Secretary to the Lower Burdekin Farmers' Association.¹⁶⁷ The scientists from the B.S.E.S. took a keen interest in the trials on the Lower Burdekin in an attempt to discover which varieties were best suited to irrigation. Badila, Goru and Trinidad Seeding No. 60 proved to be particularly suited to irrigation. Accordingly, those varieties were widely distributed throughout the district during the late 1900s.¹⁶⁸

Despite the improved irrigation practices and the adoption of new varieties of cane that were suited to irrigation, the farmers and scientists still knew little about the mechanics of the underground water movement on the Lower Burdekin during the 1900s. The growers in the district continued to rely on the yearly rains to replenish their water supplies. There was no attempt to monitor the underground water supply or investigate its fluctuations. Also, there was no interest shown in

¹⁶⁴ Anon., "Tropical Industries: Irrigation on the Burdekin Delta", Queensland Agricultural Journal, 12 (1903): 50.

¹⁶⁵ H. Easterby, "Annual Report of the B.S.E.S., 1910", Q.P.P., 3 (1909-1910), p. 348.

¹⁶⁶ T.D.B., 17 November 1887; N.Q.R., 14 October 1901, p. 24.

¹⁶⁷ H. Easterby, "Annual Report of the B.S.E.S., 1910", p. 345.

¹⁶⁸ W. Maxwell, "Annual Report of the B.S.E.S., 1908", Q.P.P., 3 (1908): 255-256; H. Easterby, "Annual Report of the B.S.E.S., 1909", Q.P.P., 2 (1909): 525, 532; and E.E. Scriven, "Annual Report of the B.S.E.S., 1913", Q.P.P., 2 (1913): 58.

improving the amount of water available for irrigation, although John Drysdale, ever the engineer, did suggest in 1906 that the bank of the Burdekin River should be cut at a point about a quarter of a mile from the head of Plantation Creek with a view to admitting the river water into the creek for irrigation purposes.¹⁶⁹ This scheme in a slightly modified form eventually became a reality in 1936.¹⁷⁰ Even though substantial progress was made in the field of irrigation in the 1900s, there was still much to learn about the district's underground water supply.

7.8 CONCLUSIONS

Between 1902 and 1905 the Lower Burdekin sugar industry underwent few changes. Like the late 1890s, most small farmers continued to rely on Melanesian workers and Drysdale Bros. and Australian Estates maintained their operations as neoplantations. In both instances, there was no immediate need for them to change their practices, because of the continued availability of Melanesian labourers, although the Commonwealth Government encouraged them to do so. However, in 1906 when the Lower Burdekin small farmers were faced with the imminent departure of the Melanesians they quickly began to employ 'whites' in order to continue growing sugar-cane, although there were other activities they could have turned to instead of sugar cultivation. Similarly, when the region's planters were threatened with the loss of cheap workers they tried employing 'whites', possibly in an attempt to maintain their operations as plantations. These trials with European workers, however, were generally considered unsatisfactory. Consequently, both firms subdivided their plantation lands into small farms which were leased to tenants. In doing so they turned their factories into proprietary central mills supplied solely by small family farms worked by 'whites'.

The changes to the structure of the Lower Burdekin sugar industry in the 1900s, particularly its labour supply, caused tensions and fears. Initially there was a belief that the industry would collapse after the removal of the Melanesians in 1906. This did not occur, but following the large-scale introduction of Europeans into the canefields in the late 1900s came demands for higher wages and better conditions. The workers were successful in their requests, but the farmers responded by

¹⁶⁹ N.Q.H., 13 August 1906, p. 19.

¹⁷⁰ N.G. Cassidy, "Irrigation Waters of the Burdekin Delta", B.S.E.S. Technical Communication, 1 (1937): 37.

introducing machinery and labour saving devices. Also, the emergence of a group of new farmers on the Lower Burdekin in the 1900s, especially those who grew cane on their own land, led to new pressures on the millers to expand their factories' capacities and renewed attempts to establish a co-operatively-owned central mill in the district. The farmers, however, only managed to achieve some concessions from the millers with regard to expanded facilities. Their endeavours to achieve a mill which they controlled were again defeated.

As a result of the farmers' failure to obtain a co-operative mill there was a great similarity between the system of production that emerged on the Lower Burdekin in the 1900s and the neoplantation system: they were both dominated by the millers, in particular John Drysdale. Indeed, John Drysdale continued to finance many of the farmers, determine the price paid for the cane and exercise considerable influence over Australian Estates' operations at Kalamia. In addition, Drysdale Bros. through careful management and the expansion of Pioneer Mill's catchment area to include growers in the Macdesme, Jarvisfield and Haughton River localities, ensured they remained the district's premier sugar producer. In contrast, Australian Estates, despite the considerable increase in Kalamia Mill's catchment area, still only produced thirty per cent of the region's sugar in the late 1900s (see Table 7.7).

Finally, if the Federal Government had not prohibited the recruitment of Melanesians to Australia after 1904, was there any likelihood of the system of proprietary central mills supplied by small family farms worked by 'whites' emerging on the Lower Burdekin in the 1900s? It is always difficult to speculate on what may have happened, but it is reasonable to argue that because the Lower Burdekin plantations survived the difficulties of the late 1880s and 1890s, then they may have remained in operation until the 1910s, given the continued careful and successful management of John Drysdale. Similarly, it was possible that the district's small farmers would have continued to rely on Melanesians during the 1900s, unless encouraged to employ 'whites'. However, it is also reasonable to assert that by the late 1900s, union opposition to cheap, indentured labour, the increasing cost of recruiting Melanesians and their diminished availability would have forced the Lower Burdekin small farmers and planters to consider employing 'whites' if they wished to continue cane cultivation. However, if the planters decided to maintain operations by relying on 'whites', it is fair to argue that the cost to do so would have become prohibitive by the late 1910s, especially as they were also coming under increasing pressure to upgrade their mills.

Eventually, the planters would have ceased cane growing and subdivided their lands for sale or rental to small farms. Therefore, the Federal Government's decision in 1904 to stop Melanesian recruitment only hastened the inevitable emergence on the Lower Burdekin of the system of proprietary central mills supplied by small family farms worked by 'whites'.

CHAPTER 8
THE INKERMANN AND HAUGHTON RIVER DISTRICT
EXPANSION: 1913-1920

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The years 1913-1920 are a distinct but complex period in the history of sugar growing on the Lower Burdekin. As the title of this chapter suggests, it was a time of substantial expansion in the acreage under cane in the Haughton River district and when cane growing commenced on the Inkerman lands on the southern side of the Burdekin River. The years 1913-1920 can also be characterized as a time of hardship for the Lower Burdekin farmers and millers, who were faced with wartime restrictions, labour shortages, severe droughts and delays in harvesting due to industrial disputes. On the other hand, it was also a period of optimism for at the least the district's farmers, as the Ryan Government introduced legislation which established local tribunals to determine the prices paid for the farmers' cane. In addition, some of the Lower Burdekin farmers at last achieved their goal of having a sugar mill they controlled established in the region, when Invicta Mill was shifted to the Haughton River district from Bundaberg in 1920. The power of the district's millers over the farmers had been curtailed.

This complex phase in the history of the Lower Burdekin sugar industry will now be examined, beginning with a review of the broader political and economic forces which were shaping the Queensland sugar industry between 1913 and 1920. As in the previous decades, the Commonwealth and Queensland Governments continued to play vital roles in influencing the evolution of the state's sugar industry.

8.2 AN INDUSTRY OF NATIONAL IMPORTANCE

When the Commonwealth Government abolished the bounty on sugar grown by 'white' labourers in 1912, it did so knowing that the Queensland Government had agreed to accept responsibility for the industry once again and that there would be a continuation of the policy that excluded aliens from involvement in the sugar industry.¹ To regain control over the sugar industry, the Queensland Government in mid-1913 introduced three pieces of legislation. These bills were as follows:

¹ The Chief Secretary, Queensland, to the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth, 5 September 1912 (reproduced in Q.P.P., 3 (1912): 401).

- (a) The Sugar Growers' Act of 1913 which provided for the payment by the mills direct to the growers of what was the old bounty plus the sum of 2s. 2d. per ton of cane supplied. The latter amount was assumed to be the sum returnable out of the £1 hitherto retained by the Federal Government.
- (b) The Sugar Growers Employees Act of 1913 which temporarily maintained the rates of wages and working hours fixed by the "Tudor Regulations" in August 1912 until they could be reviewed.
- (c) The Sugar Cultivation Act of 1913 which required all citizens not exempt from the Act,² such as Chinese, Japanese, Pacific Islanders and Negroes to either obtain a certificate of authority to cultivate and harvest a crop of sugar-cane which they planted before 1913 or a certificate of exemption if they wanted to engage in or carry on the cultivation of sugar-cane (farm labourers) or be employed in or in connection with the sugar industry (mill labourers, cooks, laundrymen). To be granted a certificate of exemption the applicant had to pass a dictation test in any language for the time being directed by the Secretary of Agriculture. The aim of the legislation was two-fold: first, it sought to encourage the employment of 'whites' in the Queensland sugar industry; and second, the Act in conjunction with the Leases to Aliens Restrictions Act of 1912 attempted to end the cultivation of sugar-cane by aliens.³

The above legislation, although ensuring coloured labour was prohibited from large scale participation in Queensland's sugar industry, was according to the Labour Opposition of "marginal value".⁴ Under the new legislation growers continued to have the price they received for their cane fixed by the miller, and not by an independent tribunal. In contrast, farm labourers and mill workers had their conditions improved in the industrial courts. Also, it was noted that farmers could receive

² Citizens exempt from the Act included Australians, Europeans and white Americans. It is interesting to note that Italians, the focus of so much hostility from sugar growers and unionists in the 1920s, were exempt from the Act.

³ This legislation made it unlawful to lease any parcel of land exceeding five acres with or to an alien who had not first obtained a certificate that he was able to read or write from dictation in such languages as the Secretary for Public Lands directed (Q.P.P., 2 (1913): 387).

⁴ Denis Murphy, T.J. Ryan: A Political Biography (Brisbane: Uni. of Queensland Press, 1975), p. 83.

less for their cane under the Sugar Growers' Act of 1913 as the legislation provided no means of preventing the millers from reducing the price of cane so as to rob the growers of the additional 2s. 2d. per ton of cane, even though a first payment of 2s. 2d. per ton was made. This practice did occur according to Shogren, although no specific mills were listed as being the offenders.⁵

The deficiencies in the sugar industry legislation of 1913, which were raised above, did indeed become apparent in 1914. Following the review of the wages and conditions received by workers in the Queensland sugar industry, Justice McNaughton raised the minimum wage for sugar workers from 36s. for a forty-eight hour week to 39s. and 37s. for workers in the northern and southern region respectively.⁶ In contrast, farmers in 1914 were paid on average the same prices they received for their cane in 1913, for the millers were unwilling to pay more for their cane. This occurred because the millers were forced to accept a £1 reduction in the price they obtained for a ton of raw sugar; a result of the Commonwealth allowing the prices fixing boards in New South Wales and Victoria to reduce the wholesale price of refined sugar.⁷

As a protest against the prices offered by the millers, farmers at Mackay, Childers and Innisfail refused to harvest their cane for various lengths of time during the 1914 crushing season.⁸ These strikes combined with the low prices for raw sugar received by the millers resulted in some of them making an absolute loss on the season's operations. In addition, it was reported that the low prices were causing some farmers to get out of the industry, especially as Italians and other foreigners were keen to obtain farms.⁹

⁵ Diana Shogren, "Agriculture: 1915-1929" in Labor in Power: The Labor Party and Governments in Queensland 1915-1957, Ed. Denis Murphy (Brisbane: Uni. of Queensland Press, 1980), p. 181.

⁶ A.S.J., 7 August 1913, p. 266; A.S.J., 2 July 1914, p. 234.

⁷ Shogren, "Agriculture 1915-1929", p. 182; E.E. Scriven, "Annual Report of the B.S.E.S., 1914", Q.P.P., 2 (1914): 857.

⁸ A.S.J., 7 May 1914, pp. 140-141; A.S.J., 2 July 1914, pp. 262-264; A.S.J., 6 August 1914, p. 880; A.S.J., 3 September 1914, p. 412.

⁹ E.E. Scriven, "Annual Report of the B.S.E.S., 1914", Q.P.P., 2 (1914): 857; E.E. Scriven, "Annual Report of the B.S.E.S., 1915", Q.P.P., 2 (1915-16): 1127.

Midway through 1915, Denham's Liberal Government was defeated at an election which saw every sugar-growing constituency in northern Queensland swing to Labour.¹⁰ As a result of the election, T.J. Ryan emerged as Queensland's new Premier. Upon assuming office he found that the commencement of the season's crushing had been delayed. This had occurred because the Commonwealth and the C.S.R. Co. could not agree on the price the latter should receive for its raw sugar. As a consequence, millers had refused to sign agreements with their growers, who in turn were refusing to allow their crops to be harvested.¹¹

The situation that Ryan found in June 1915 had its origins in the drought of 1914 which had caused a reduction in the season's harvest. Due to the continuation of the drought in early 1915 and the export of sugar to Canada by the C.S.R. Co., it was expected that there would be a shortage of raw sugar for domestic consumption in Australia during the 1915-1916 season. Thus, both growers and the C.S.R. Co. were requesting an increase in the price of refined sugar. However, the Commonwealth Government was not satisfied with the reasons given by the C.S.R. Co. for seeking a price rise and ordered an investigation of the sugar industry. This inquiry found that the shortage of sugar was in no way the fault of the Queensland growers, but that the C.S.R. Co., knowing of the impending shortage, had partially engineered it by exporting sugar to Canada.¹²

In an effort to end the deadlock between the C.S.R. Co. and the Federal Government over the price to be paid for raw sugar, Ryan travelled to Melbourne in mid-June for discussions with both parties to the disagreement. After a week's negotiations an agreement was arrived at whereby the Queensland Government undertook to acquire by proclamation the whole of the state's sugar crop at an average price of £18 per ton of raw sugar (compared to £14.15s.6d. in 1914) and sell it to the Commonwealth at cost. The latter agreed to pass on the refined product at the lowest possible price. The Commonwealth Government agreed to impose an embargo on imports and exports of sugar and took responsibility for purchasing from abroad sufficient quantities to make up

¹⁰ Bolton, A Thousand Miles Away, p. 306.

¹¹ Murphy, T.J. Ryan, p. 113.

¹² Murphy, T.J. Ryan, p. 112.

any shortfall in production for domestic requirements.¹³ The official justification for those interventionist measures was threefold: first, to protect Australian consumers from possible price exploitation by the local producers due to the rising international price of sugar occasioned by the war; second, to ensure adequate supplies of sugar to all Australian consumers during the war by preventing the Australian sugar producers from exporting their sugar to capitalize on high prices abroad; and third, to protect those engaged in the industry from the operations of the State based Food Prices Boards.¹⁴

There were doubts as to the legality of the proclamation acquiring the 1915 sugar crop and expressions of concern over what would happen if the C.S.R. Co. refused to refine the sugar. Ryan's government moved quickly to "legitimize" his actions by introducing The Sugar Acquisition Act of 1915, which ratified the seizure of that year's sugar crop. The Commonwealth and the C.S.R. Co. in early July signed an agreement on the refining of sugar under the new arrangements. Consequently, growers resumed cutting and the mills began to crush.¹⁵

Premier Ryan, true to his election promise, also introduced legislation in mid-1915 to establish tribunals to decide the price farmers received for their cane. Under the Regulation of Sugar Cane Prices Board Act of 1915, growers and millers were represented on each Local Board. The Central Board - consisting of a District Court judge as Chairman, a growers' representative, a millers' representative, an accountant and a chemist - was to act as an appeal board and could determine the price of cane in those areas where Local Boards did not exist or could not arrive at an agreement. The Local Boards could have jurisdiction over one mill or several. The mill owners, or not less than twenty growers, could apply for a Local Board by no later than 31 January in any year. It was further provided that during 1915, the award of such Local Boards or of the Central Cane Prices Board, could be made retrospective, so as to recover a price for the whole of the sugar season of 1915. Under the legislation, the boards in fixing a base price for cane could allow deductions to be made in respect to burnt, frosted or diseased cane, thrashy cane or varieties of cane, the growing of which had been

¹³ Shogren, "Agriculture: 1915-1929", p. 183.

¹⁴ Easterby, The Queensland Sugar Industry, p. 112.

¹⁵ Murphy, T.J. Ryan, p. 114.

disapproved by the Local Board.¹⁶ Finally, the Act required farmers to decide upon which mill they wanted their land to be assigned. When the Local Boards were gazetted in late 1915, cane growers were assigned to each mill.¹⁷ Such an assignment embraced all the land owned by the farmer, and no distinction was made between portions of land planted or not planted with cane.

After certain minor amendments were inserted by the Legislative Council, the Bill was assented to in October 1915. It was accepted by the government and growers that the Act would require amending in the light of the first year's experience. Nevertheless, as far as the farmers were concerned, it seemed to at least provide some guarantee that they would receive a fair price for their cane. However, the millers, in particular the C.S.R. Co. resisted the new legislation.¹⁸ Thus, in the first years in which the Central and Local Cane Prices Boards operated there were many disagreements between millers and growers over the prices to be paid for cane. The Lower Burdekin was no exception, as will be seen in Chapter 8.4.

After the problems of 1915, the sugar industry in the early months of 1916 was free of any major disputes. Indeed, the crushing season of 1916 began without incident, although the price the millers were to receive for raw sugar had not been decided. Despite the peaceful commencement to the 1916 crushing, the sugar industry was soon to be troubled by an award for sugar workers handed down by Acting Judge Dickson.

Dickson had started taking evidence at Cairns in May 1916 on the working conditions of sugar labourers. He ended his tour through the sugar growing regions two months later in Brisbane. After considering the hundreds of pages of material he had gathered on wages, accommodation conditions, food and the profits of the millers, Dickson in late August granted a fifty per cent increase in the wages to all employees in the sugar industry, set out a schedule of food to be

¹⁶ Details on the legislation which established the Central Cane Prices Board were summarized from Connolly, John Drysdale and the Burdekin, p. 146; Murphy, T.J. Ryan, p. 120; and Shogren, "Agriculture: 1915-1929", p. 183.

¹⁷ Q.G.G., 105 (1915): 1971.

¹⁸ Details on the C.S.R. Co.'s opposition to the Regulation of Sugar Cane Prices Board Act of 1915 can be found in Murphy, T.J. Ryan, pp. 177-178.

provided and ordered that lights, stretchers and mattresses should be included in the accommodation provided for the workers.¹⁹ Upon hearing of the Dickson Award, the farmers, claiming they could not afford to pay such wages and provide the extravagant scale of provisions, refused to harvest their cane. Sugar mills throughout Queensland began to close.

In an attempt to recommence the state's sugar mills, the Queensland Government in September began negotiations with the Commonwealth to increase the price of raw sugar. The A.S.P.A. simultaneously tried to convince the Commonwealth to use its War Precautions Act to set aside the Dickson Award. The Federal Government refused both requests.²⁰ Consequently, the A.S.P.A. applied to the Queensland Supreme Court to have the Dickson Award declared invalid. Its petition, however, failed.²¹ As a result, the farmers, who by this time realized that they would be in a worse position if they did not get their crops off, began cutting their cane. The sugar mills in Queensland started crushing again, although the industry remained in a state of turmoil with growers attacking the Queensland Government's apparent inability to solve the crisis. Eventually, Premier Ryan announced that a growers' conference was being organized to obtain a clearer picture of the increases in growers' costs so as to be able to place a better case before the Commonwealth for an increase in the price of sugar.²²

The growers' conference organized by Ryan met in early March 1917. It became apparent that the organizations representing the farmers [A.S.P.A. and United Cane Growers Association (U.C.G.A.)]²³ were divided in their desires for the industry. The A.S.P.A. wanted complete Commonwealth control, while the U.C.G.A. supported Queensland Government control over the industry, fearing that Commonwealth involvement would return them to the pre-1915 days. The divisions produced a heated conference which resulted in the A.S.P.A. delegates walking out on the discussions. Consequently, it was decided to ask the

¹⁹ Brisbane Courier, 22 August 1916, p. 8.

²⁰ Murphy, T.J. Ryan, pp. 179, 202.

²¹ Connolly, John Drysdale and the Burdekin, p. 155.

²² Murphy, T.J. Ryan, p. 233.

²³ The U.C.G.A. was formed in 1915 through the amalgamation of regional farmers' groups (e.g. Pioneer Farmers' and Graziers' Association) because growers felt their interests were being inadequately represented by the A.S.P.A. In 1926 the U.C.G.A. was re-organized as the Queensland Cane Growers' Council (Nolan, Bundaberg: History and People, p. 119).

Commonwealth for £24 a ton for raw sugar, and that the price of cane be fixed by the Local Cane Prices Boards. Prime Minister Hughes agreed to the latter request and an increase in the price of raw sugar to £21 a ton on the following conditions: firstly, the Queensland Government would not introduce any new laws or taxes affecting the sugar industry during the term in which the millers were paid £21 for a ton of raw sugar; and secondly, the Queensland Government was to guarantee that waterside and sugar workers would not seek higher wages or changes in their working conditions in the same period.²⁴

Ryan initially decided to refrain from taking immediate action on Hughes' requests, despite the latter's threats throughout May that he would not guarantee the price rise for a ton of raw sugar. His strategy was successful, for the Queensland Arbitration Court in late May reduced the increase in wages awarded by Dickson but maintained the other conditions.²⁵ Although the Australian Workers Union agreed to accept the award for only a year, the Queensland Government informed Hughes that the labour question was settled and asked that millers be now paid £21 for a ton of raw sugar.²⁶ Hughes eventually signified his agreement to the increase in the price for a ton of raw sugar in mid-June 1917.

After finalizing the price to be paid for raw sugar in 1917, Ryan turned his attention to amending the Regulation of Sugar Cane Prices Act of 1915. The Act needed revision as the Supreme Court had found some parts of the legislation unwarranted, but more importantly the initial Act was lacking with regard to gaining information from the mills, a necessary pre-requisite to deciding local prices for cane. Also, there was no way to force millers to pay the price determined by the Local or Central Cane Prices Boards. Indeed, Ryan on a tour of the sugar growing regions in Queensland in June 1917 found that farmers in the Isis district had already complained to Prime Minister Hughes that the C.S.R. Co. at its Childers Mill was offering 18d. a ton less than was awarded by the Local Cane Prices Board,²⁷ while on the Lower Burdekin, Australian Estates was refusing to start Kalamia Mill because it declined to pay its suppliers the gazetted price for cane (see Chapter 8.4 for a full discussion).

²⁴ Murphy, T.J. Ryan, pp. 234-235, 250-252.

²⁵ Connolly, John Drysdale and the Burdekin, p. 158.

²⁶ Brisbane Courier, 31 May 1917, p. 6.

²⁷ Murphy, T.J. Ryan, p. 255.

Ryan had tried to amend the Regulation of Sugar Cane Prices Act of 1915 in 1918, but the legislation after being examined by a Select Committee was defeated by the Legislative Council.²⁸ However, the Minister for Agriculture re-introduced essentially the same Bill in 1917, although a new clause had been added giving the government power to take over a mill which was not paying the award price for cane as determined by the Local or Central Cane Prices Board.²⁹ Predictably, the new Bill met with opposition from the Legislative Council, the C.S.R. Co. and the A.S.P.A. The latter organization protested to Prime Minister Hughes stating that the legislation broke the agreement reached between the Commonwealth and Queensland over the price to be paid for sugar in 1917. Hughes wrote to Ryan asking him to withdraw the new clauses in the Bill, but the Queensland Premier maintained his stance that the additions were necessary.³⁰ Eventually, after considerable negotiations with the Legislative Council, the legislation was passed with the following amendments: millowners and cane growers could not contract out of a local board; check chemists could under certain conditions inspect any farm or mill or any books or records of these relating to the manufacture or growing of sugar cane; and the Minister could force millers to pay the award for cane or have their mills taken over by the State.³¹

The early months of 1918 for the sugar industry, after the problems of 1917, were also a difficult time. Several cyclones crossed the north Queensland coast and heavy rain and floods damaged the crops in many of the sugar growing regions.³² However, the industry was free of disputes over the price to be paid for raw sugar. The Commonwealth agreed to acquire the Queensland sugar crop for the 1918 and 1919 season at £21, on the condition that the Queensland Government did not erect any further central sugar mills.³³

²⁸ For details on the Select Committee's investigation see Charles Neilsen (Chairman), "Report and Minutes of Evidence Taken Before the Select Committee Appointed to Report and Inquire upon the Regulation of Sugar Cane Prices Amendment Bill", Q.P.P., 2 (1916-1917): 1263-1321.

²⁹ Murphy, T.J. Ryan, p. 295.

³⁰ Murphy, T.J. Ryan, p. 296.

³¹ Q.P.D., 128 (1917): 3464-3465.

³² Easterby, The Queensland Sugar Industry, p. 58.

³³ C.P.D., 85 (1917-1919): 6342; C.P.D., 86 (1917-1919): 6784.

During the term of the 1918 Commonwealth-Queensland sugar agreement, World War I was concluded and the Federal Government began to unwind its wartime enactments associated with the War Precautions Act. However, the Commonwealth's wartime marketing control over such raw products as wheat, wool and sugar was not relinquished immediately, but extended under the Commercial Activities Act of 1919. Under this legislation, the price of raw sugar was fixed at £21 until at least the 30th of September 1920.³⁴ To facilitate a decision on what Commonwealth controls should exist over the sugar industry after late 1920, the Federal Government appointed the Piddington Royal Commission to examine the matter.

The Piddington Royal Commission, after protracted hearings, eventually submitted a report in early 1920.³⁵ The Commissioners recommended that the control of the sugar industry by the Commonwealth be exercised by a body possibly called the Commonwealth Sugar Commission and that the price of raw sugar be increased from £21 to £22, especially since wages to workers in the sugar industry had been increased under the McCawley Award of 1919.³⁶ However, the recommendations of the report were never implemented, because Prime Minister Hughes raised the price for raw sugar in early 1920 without any reference to the findings of the Commission.

Hughes' action in agreeing to the increase in the price of raw sugar before the announcement of the Piddington Commission's findings was a result of a deputation of representatives from the Queensland sugar industry requesting that the price of raw sugar be increased from £21 to £30.6s.8d. and that the agreement to that effect should be made for a period of not less than three years. The Commonwealth acceded to the deputation's request under the following conditions: a council of representatives from the industry was to meet in February each year to decide if an increase in the price of raw sugar was needed; wages to sugar workers were not to be altered during the crushing season; and

³⁴ The Acts of the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1919 (Melbourne: Commonwealth Government Printer, 1920), Vol. 17, p. 22.

³⁵ Easterby, The Queensland Sugar Industry, p. 59.

³⁶ For details on wages paid to sugar workers in 1917 and 1919 see A.S.J., 7 June 1917, p. 189 and A.B. Piddington et al., "Evidence of the Royal Commission on the Sugar Industry", C.P.P., 4 (1920-21): 917.

there was to be no increase in the wages fixed for the 1920 season during the term of the agreement between Queensland and the Commonwealth, except to meet any increased cost of living.³⁷

Hughes by negotiating such an agreement ensured that the crushing seasons in the immediate future would not be interrupted by disputes over wages, as had been the case in 1916 when the Dickson Award was announced after the crushing had commenced. Also, the 1920 sugar agreement was a partial solution to the problem of how much post-war control the Commonwealth should exercise over the industry, for it provided three years during which time the Federal Government could examine the options available to it with regard to regulating the industry. Finally, the agreement meant that growers and millers received more for their products, as the price Australian sugar growers received in 1920 was well below the overseas price being paid for sugar. Indeed, during the late 1910s the Queensland sugar-cane farmers never demanded world parity, although overseas prices for raw sugar had increased substantially due to World War I disrupting beet production in Europe.³⁸

What were the consequences of the low prices for raw sugar during this wartime period when control over the industry was shared between the Queensland and Commonwealth Governments? On the evidence available it appears sugar manufacturing during the late 1910s and for a couple of years thereafter was a precarious business. Particularly hard hit were the southern sugar growing regions where there was a considerable drop in the area under cane (see Table 8.1) and six mill closures, of which four were in the Bundaberg district alone.³⁹ In fact, the total area under sugar-cane in Queensland between 1914 and 1920 fluctuated around 160,000 acres; this was not an expansionary phase in the industry's history. However, because of the Sugar Cultivation Act of 1913, this was the time when at last to the sympathizers of a 'White Australia', the Queensland sugar industry was purged of alien farmers and

³⁷ Memorandum of Agreement, 18 March 1920, between Representatives of the Queensland Sugar Industry and the Commonwealth Government, C.P.P., 4 (1920-21): 903.

³⁸ E.E. Scriven, "Annual Report of the B.S.E.S., 1915", Q.P.P., 2 (1915-1916): 1127; Easterby, The Queensland Sugar Industry, p. 144.

³⁹ The following mills closed in Queensland in the 1910s: Invicta, Miara, Waterloo and Baffle Creek, Bundaberg District; Nerang, near Southport; Marburg, near Ipswich; and Meadowlands at Mackay (Easterby, The Queensland Sugar Industry, p. 38; Kerr, Southern Sugar Saga, pp. 84-86; E.E. Scriven, "Annual Report of the B.S.E.S., 1917", Q.P.P., 2 (1917): 831; A.S.J., 4 February 1915, p. 814).

Table 8.1. Distribution of Sugar-Cane Acreage in Queensland,
1913-1920

Region	1913	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	1919	1920
Cairns/Mossman	17072	18040	20374	22724	24105	23597	24752	24623
Herbert/Mourilyan	25331	27655	28919	32848	34258	34347	35296	36113
Lower Burdekin	13777	19145	12860	16476	22209	22543	18240	20351
Proserpine	3788	4383	4314	5020	5647	4134	4111	4898
Mackay	37021	40540	39050	41611	42053	35426	35072	40089
Bundaberg	26384	28083	25333	25462	25653	21975	15498	19886
Childers/Maryborough	19516	18570	18148	18955	18258	15471	13047	13947
Maroochy	1232	2063	1917	1863	1657	1629	1824	2095
Brisbane/Logan	1563	2716	2112	2262	1922	1412	629	617
Total	102803	161195	153027	167221	175762	160534	148469	162619

Source: Assembled on the basis of the figures in the Annual Reports of the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Stock, in Q.P.P., 1914-1921.

workers. By 1920 the transformation of the Queensland sugar industry from being based on a neopplantation system worked by non-European labour to a system of central mills supplied by small family farms owned and worked by 'whites' was now complete.

Against this background of increasing Commonwealth and Queensland Government control over the sugar industry in the 1910s, it is now possible to begin the discussion on the changes in the sugar industry on the Lower Burdekin between 1915 and 1920. Before doing so, however, it is necessary to review the land openings in the district throughout the late 1910s.

8.3 LAND OPENINGS ON THE LOWER BURDEKIN: 1915-1920

In 1916 the Labor government in Queensland abolished freeholding, preferring perpetual and shorter-term leases. At the same time it set about actively encouraging closer settlement.⁴⁰ The soldier settlement scheme fitted into this objective. Unlike other Queensland regions, however, the Lower Burdekin was not subjected to soldier settlement schemes following the conclusion of World War I.⁴¹ Nevertheless, the Crown attempted to make the last of the suitable agricultural land in the region available for closer settlement. All of this land belonged to the unselected Inkerman Estate blocks.

The majority of the thirty-one Inkerman Estate blocks that had not been selected for the first time in 1915 were located at the base of Stokes Range, around Inkerman Siding and Mt. Alma and south of Koberinga Siding (see Figure 8.1). A small section of undivided Inkerman Estate land was also located south of Cromarty Siding in the Haughton River district. Most of this section was swampy and bordered by salt flats. It was split into three blocks and set aside for landless soldiers. However, individual blocks were opened to selection several times before they were eventually chosen as perpetual lease selections.⁴²

The occupation of the unselected Inkerman Estate blocks on the

⁴⁰ Johnston, The Call of the Land, p. 179.

⁴¹ Ross Fitzgerald, From 1915 to the Early 1980s. A History of Queensland (Brisbane: Uni. of Queensland Press, 1984), pp. 57-59.

⁴² Q.G.G., 109 (1917): 2033; Q.G.G., 110 (1918): 1305; Q.G.G., 112 (1919): 29; Q.G.G., 113 (1919): 1707; Q.G.G., 114 (1920): 578; Q.G.G., 115 (1920): 2308.

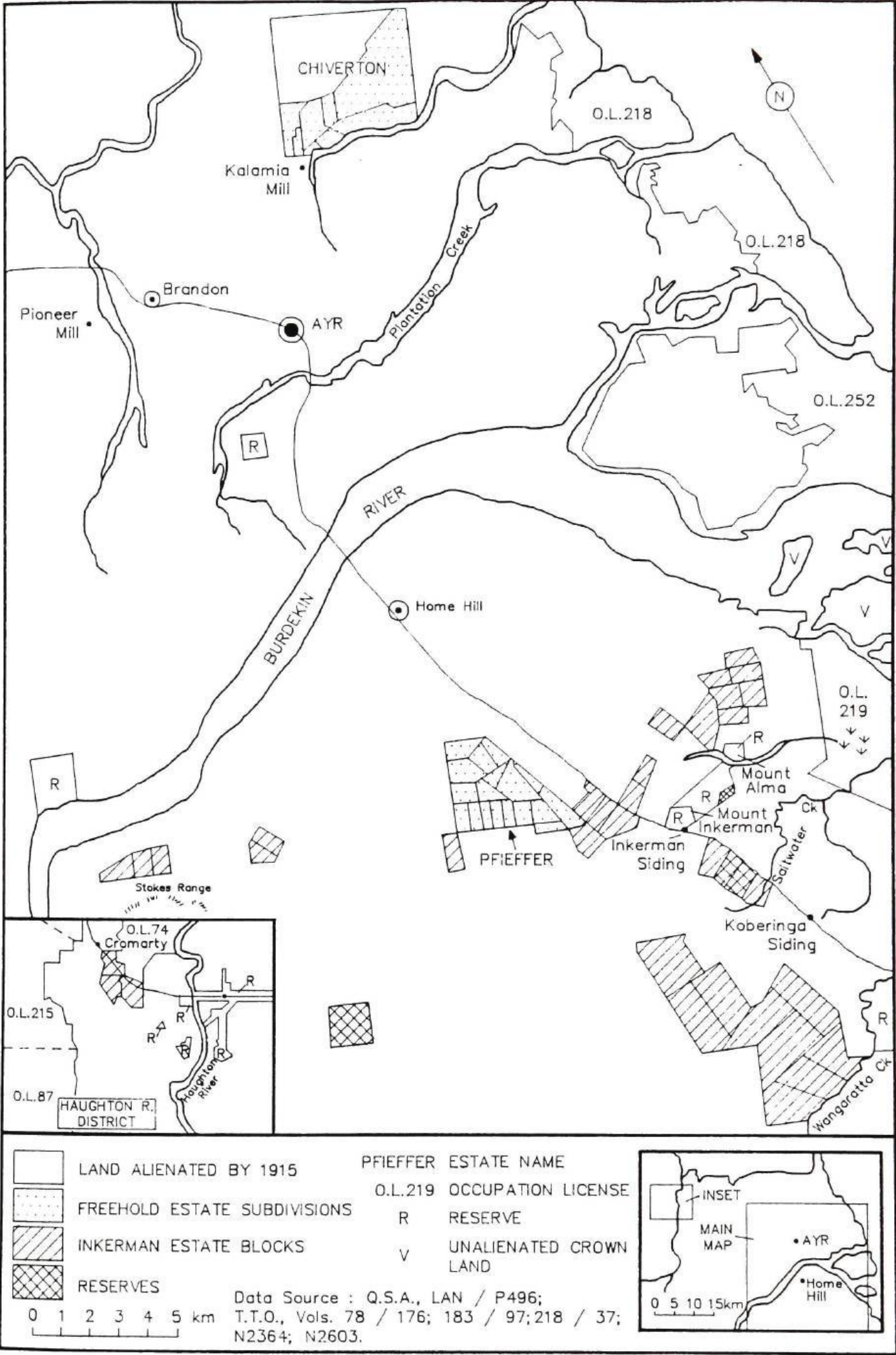


Figure 8.1 Land Openings on the Lower Burdekin, 1916 – 1920

southern side of the Burdekin River occurred over several years. Initially, the Crown allowed some of the country to be leased as occupation licenses, with the proviso that the lessee had twenty-one days to quit if a settler wanted a block or blocks.⁴³ Interest in the blocks was not great, although the Crown was able to dispose of seven of the blocks during 1916 and 1917. Eventually, in December 1917 the Crown declared twenty of the remaining blocks unchosen for the first time open to immediate selection.⁴⁴ Priority was to be given to returned landless soldiers. Eleven of these blocks were secured in 1918. The remaining blocks were all chosen over the next few years with the last being selected for the first time in 1922. Some of the blocks, especially those at the base of Stokes Range, were forfeited soon after initial selection and had to be re-opened to occupation several times before they were occupied permanently by settlers.⁴⁵

Freehold estate subdivisions on the Lower Burdekin in the late 1910s were limited to the splitting up of Pfieffer Estate, south of Home Hill, and the southern section of Chiverton Estate, closest to Kalamia Creek (see Figure 8.1). Pfieffer Estate was one of the large cadasters on the southern side of the Burdekin River not owned by the N.A.P.C. Its subdivision into nineteen blocks in 1916 occurred immediately after the last of the Inkerman Estate subdivisions and undoubtedly was timed to capitalize on the influx of settlers into the region. All the blocks were eventually sold to settlers in the early 1920s. The southern section of Chiverton Estate was broken into six smaller areas in 1916, but the blocks were mainly leased to settlers in the late 1910s.⁴⁶

Overall, land openings on the Lower Burdekin between 1915 and 1920, unlike the previous five years, were quite limited in extent and had little influence on the evolution of the region's sugar industry. Most of the expansion that occurred in the Lower Burdekin sugar industry in the 1910s, as will be shown shortly, was related to the Inkerman Estate settlers beginning cane cultivation.

⁴³ Q.S.A., LAN/S120, pp. 136, 137, 144, 149.

⁴⁴ Q.G.G., 109 (1917): 2033.

⁴⁵ Details on the selection of these blocks are to be found in Q.S.A., LAN/P496.

⁴⁶ T.T.O., Vols. 78/176; 218/37, 183/97-98.

8.4 A NEW MILL FOR THE LOWER BURDEKIN

When the Federal Government removed its Excise and Bounty legislation in late 1912, thus returning the responsibility of the sugar industry to Queensland, John Drysdale's plans for Inkerman Mill were well advanced. In designing Inkerman, John Drysdale had to aid him, not only his engineering knowledge, but his close experience of sugar milling extending over almost thirty years. The new factory, therefore, contained some innovations: it was highly electrified, a rarity in the early 1910s; the original crushing train consisted of three close coupled six foot mills, instead of the five foot six inch mills that were at Pioneer; and the original plant only filled half the available space in the crushing house so as to ensure there was ample space left for future expansion.⁴⁷

John Drysdale had hoped Inkerman would have crushed for the first time in 1913,⁴⁸ but by June of that year most of the machinery for the new mill had not been assembled, making it impossible to commence crushing, although the mill building was complete.⁴⁹ Also, even though cane was reported as being grown on the Home Hill side of the Burdekin River in 1913 (see Figure 8.2), John Drysdale realized that this cane would be unready for harvesting in 1913.

Whilst the construction of Inkerman was being completed in the latter half of 1913, Drysdale Bros.' other mill on the Lower Burdekin crushed over 100,000 tons of sugar cane; a record for the factory. The mill was supplied by 135 farmers, the highest since Pioneer was established. This increase in the number of Pioneer suppliers was a result of new farmers at Jarvisfield and the Haughton River sending their cane to the mill (see Table 8.2). Kalamia Mill also crushed a record in 1913, handling over 70,000 tons of cane for the first time. Indeed, so much cane was grown for the mill that over 5,000 tons was diverted to Pioneer for crushing (see Table 8.3). Unfortunately, the list of growers

⁴⁷ The machinery for Inkerman was manufactured by George Fletcher and Co. of Derby, England, and the general layout of the plant was designed and erected by a Scottish engineer, J. Pickering, working to the instructions of John Drysdale (Connolly, John Drysdale and the Burdekin, p. 141).

⁴⁸ John Drysdale to Hector Kidd, Sydney, 2 April 1911, J.C.U., PMR/LB/26, p. 5; John Drysdale to Hector Kidd, Sydney, 2 January 1912, J.C.U., PMR/LB/26, p. 21; John Drysdale to J.R. Paddle, Director of the Bureau of Central Sugar Mills, Brisbane, 8 January 1912, J.C.U., PMR/LB/26, p. 25.

⁴⁹ N.O.R., 16 June 1913, p. 23.

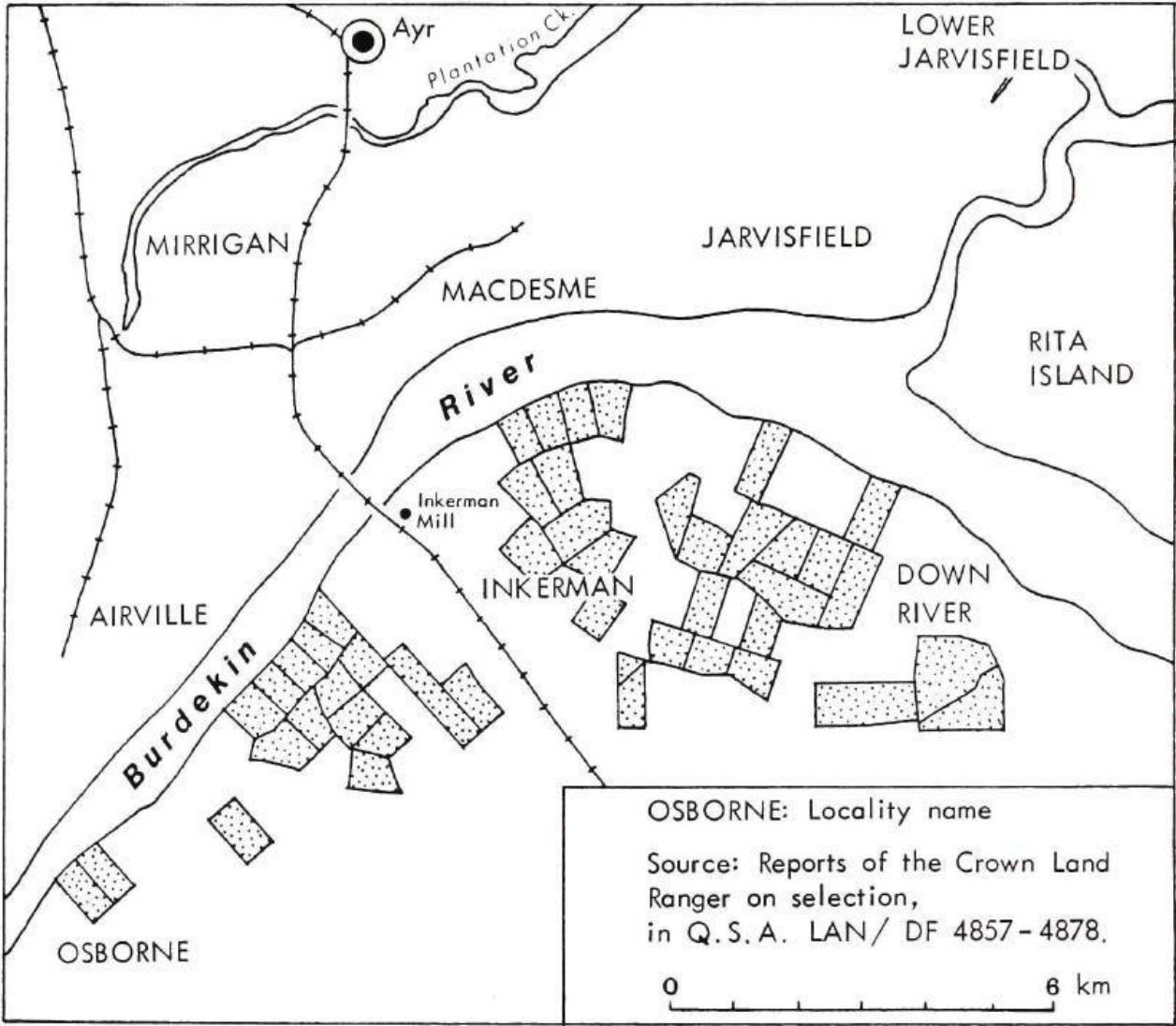


Figure 8.2 The Location of Farmers on the Southern Side of the Burdekin River Reported to be Growing Sugar-Cane in 1913.

Table 8.2. The Number of Suppliers per Locality in Pioneer Mill's Catchment Area, 1913-1920

Locality	1912	1913	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	1919	1920
Pioneer Estate	27	26	24	22	23	23	26	29	29
Labatt Lagoon	7	6	6	7	7	7	7	6	7
Airville	13	15	15	14	15	19	18	18	17
Maidavale	11	11	9	8	9	9	8	9	9
Colevale/Drynie	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	3
Haughton River	10	20	34	35	49(0) ³	26(21)	52	53(0)	44(0)
Mirrigan	16	17	14	11	11(0)	6(1)	8(5?)	8(1)	8(1?)
Macdesme	15	16	21	18	20(0)	3(3)	1(7?)	3(6)	4(5?)
Jarvisfield/Rita Island	3	11	2	11 ₂	19(0)	0(0) ₄	0(0?)	0(0)	0(0?)
Other (Ayr, Fernlea)	4	4 ₁	5	33	3	3(5)	4	4	3
Unknown	5	5	7	5	7	8	15	10	11
Total	116	135	142	169	168	109(30)	144(12?)	145(7)	132(6?)

Notes: 1. Does not include 8 Kalamia suppliers who had their cane diverted to Pioneer for crushing.

2. Includes 29 growers located on the southern side of the Burdekin River, who normally supplied Inkerman.

3. Figures in brackets refer to the number of partial suppliers of Pioneer Mill. Question marks indicate an estimation of the number of suppliers.

4. Includes 4 Inkerman growers who had part of their crop crushed at Pioneer.

5. Does not include the 84 Kalamia growers who had their crop partially crushed at Pioneer in 1919.

Source: Constructed from lists of Pioneer Mill Growers in P.M.B., Register of Pioneer Mill Growers, 1907-1914, P.M.B., Register of Pioneer Mill Growers, 1915-1919, and P.M.B., Register of Pioneer Mill Growers, 1920-1935, after reference to A.S.C., Rate Books, 1913-1920, and oral interviews.

Table 8.3. Tons of Cane Crushed at the Lower Burdekin Mills,
1913-1920

	Pioneer	Kalamia	Inkerman	Total
1913	127945*	75601	**	203546
1914	104864	72007	62151	239022
1915	51689	16991	**	68680
1916	106119	45966	36681	188766
1917	96593	44722	104573	245888
1918	115025	93465	134297	374185+
1919	51051	**	41368	92419
1920	59975	45643	56510	162128

* Includes 5,241 tons diverted from Kalamia Mill.

** Did not operate.

+ Includes 31,401 tons of cane crushed at Proserpine Mill

Source: Constructed from the figures in K.M.A., Letterbook, 1915-1924, p. 116, and Anon., Pioneer Sugar Mills (Pty.) Ltd., 1884-1958, p. 24.

who supplied Kalamia in 1913 could not be located, so it is not possible to comment on the number of farmers who sent their cane to the factory in that year. However, it is reasonable to assume that a greater number of growers supplied Kalamia in 1913 than 1912, because settlers on the newly opened sections of Jarvisfield and Airdmillan Estate would have had cane ready for crushing.

Shortly after the 1913 crushing commenced on the Lower Burdekin, the Queensland Government, as mentioned earlier, introduced legislation which required non-Europeans to either obtain certificates of authority to cultivate and harvest a crop of sugar-cane planted before 1913 or certificates of exemption if they wished to continue employment as mill or farm labourers. The Lower Burdekin in 1913 had less than ten non-European cane farmers; in fact the number of Melanesian and Chinese growers on the Lower Burdekin in the 1900s had not been high (see Table 8.4), especially after John Drysdale had stopped making fresh contracts to buy cane from Chinese growers in 1910.⁵⁰ The number of non-European mill and farm employees were on the other hand considerably higher, especially as Drysdale Bros. continued to employ Chinese and Japanese at Pioneer Mill. Therefore, following the introduction of the Sugar Cultivation Act of 1913, the majority of the 201 exemptions granted to aliens to allow them to continue working in the sugar industry on the Lower Burdekin were held by farm and mill labourers.⁵¹ Only ten were issued to alien farmers; all Chinese except for an Afghan. In each case, the exemptions granted to the alien farmers did not permit the holder to engage in the cultivation of sugar cane after 1915.⁵² Thus, after 1915 all cane on the Lower Burdekin was grown by Europeans, Australians or naturalized Australians. In contrast, Asiatics continued to be employed as labourers on some of the district's farms and at Pioneer and Inkerman Mills throughout the late 1910s; in fact Drysdale Bros. managed to maintain Japanese on the staff of both their mills until at least 1930,

⁵⁰ John Drysdale to the President of the Lower Burdekin Farmers' Association, 23 March 1910, J.C.U., PMR/LB/35, p. 172.

⁵¹ Q.S.A., AGS/N359, General Papers 159G.

⁵² See Certificates of Exemptions Nos. 1329, 1330, 1331, 1404, 1406, 1458, 1482, 1775, 1776, 1950, Q.S.A., AGS/N105, AGS/N108.

Table 8.4. Tons of Cane Harvested by Pacific Islander and Asiatic Farmers on the Lower Burdekin, 1898-1915

Year	Total Tons Crushed	Tons of Cane Supplied by Pacific Islanders and Asiatics	Number of Pacific Islanders and Asiatics Who Harvested Cane
1898		incomplete data	5
1899	88974	2866 (3.2)	8
1900	60665	1948 (3.2)	7
1901	99626	2212 (2.2)	4
1902	50417	4292 (8.5)	3
1903	62208	3174 (5.1)	3
1904	94719	8153 (8.6)	4
1905	85068	3952 (4.6)	5
1906	105337	7950 (7.5)	8
1907	109042	7537 (6.9)	9
1908	122371	incomplete data	
1909	107396	5604 (5.2)	9
1910	163651	9077 (5.5)	7
1911	154371	6895 (4.5)	7
1912	25304	2866 (4.5)	7
1913	203546	incomplete data	
1914	239022	incomplete data	
1915	162128	672 (0.4)	3

Note: The figure in brackets refers to the tons of cane supplied by Pacific Islanders and Asiatics as a percentage of the total amount crushed.

Source: Constructed from the tons of cane delivered to the Lower Burdekin Mills found in the following sources: J.C.U., PMR/JA/1-JA/2; J.C.U., PMR/[MISC/2] Box 11, Article 14: Records of Cane Deliverers, 1900-1910; P.M.B., Register of Pioneer Mill Growers, 1907-1914; P.M.B., Register of Pioneer Mill Growers, 1914-1919; K.M.A., Account Journal, 1897-1904; K.M.A., Manufacturer's Material Crushing Book for Sugar-Cane, 1902-1908; and K.M.A., Ledger Book, 1909-1915, pp. 351-353.

much to the disdain of local unionists.⁵³

A year before alien Asiatics and Pacific Islanders ceased to cultivate sugar-cane on the Lower Burdekin, Inkerman Mill crushed its first crop of just over 62,000 tons of sugar cane (see Table 8.3). The initial list of suppliers to Inkerman Mill could not be located, but enough documentary evidence does survive to provide some details on the geographic distribution of those earliest growers. Farmers who supplied the mill in 1914 were obviously situated in such localities as Osborne, Inkerman and Down River; areas that were reported as having sugar growers in 1913. In addition, farmers at Jarvisfield and from the Gumlu district, situated thirty miles south of Inkerman, had their cane crushed at the mill, while some growers from the Haughton River district, Mirrigan and Macdesme had part of their crops diverted from Pioneer to Inkerman Mill for processing.⁵⁴ Thus, although Inkerman Mill was situated on the southern side of the Burdekin River, it was supplied by a number of growers located on the northern side of the Burdekin in 1914.

The above arrangement did not occur by accident. It had always been John Drysdale's intention, once he was committed to building Inkerman, that cane grown at localities on the northern side of the Burdekin River should be transported across the Burdekin River Rail Bridge to ensure that the new factory received sufficient cane to allow it to operate economically in those first years when the settlers on the southern side of the Burdekin were becoming established.⁵⁵ Indeed, it was this policy that saw John Drysdale carry out negotiations in June 1913 with several Rita Island farmers about the possibility of extending a

⁵³ For reference to aliens employed in the sugar industry on the Lower Burdekin after 1913 see K.M.A., Ledger Book, 1909-1915, p. 441; J.C.U., PMR/WB5; Q.S.A., POL/J40, Bundle 1336M; Q.P.P., 3 (1925): 48; N.Q.R., 26 December 1927, p. 24; and Sec., Pioneer Sugar Mills Ltd., to the Under Sec., Dept. of Ag. and Stock, 24 January 1930, PMR/LB/50, p. 249.

⁵⁴ Extract from the Annual Report of the Land Commissioner for Townsville, 1914, Q.P.P., 2 (1915): 613; Q.P.P., 2 (1916-17): Ev. G. Deane, p. 1091, Q.3397.

⁵⁵ John Drysdale to J.R. Paddle, Director of the Bureau of Central Sugar Mills, Brisbane, 8 January 1912, J.C.U., PMR/LB/26, p. 25; John Drysdale to G.H. Pritchard, Brisbane, 15 April 1912, J.C.U., PMR/LB/26, p. 36; John Drysdale to Dr Gibson, Director of Bureau of Central Sugar Mills, Brisbane, 15 May 1913, J.C.U., PMR/LB/26, p. 125.

tramline to Rita Island.⁵⁶ These discussions were successful and resulted in Drysdale Bros. extending its tramline either in late 1913 or early 1914 (the exact date could not be determined) across the Ana-Branch to Rita Island. Cane was first reported as being cultivated on Rita Island in early 1914, but this initial crop was not harvested until 1915.⁵⁷

The diversion of cane from the Macdesme-Jarvisfield area to Inkerman Mill in 1914 had little impact on the number of farmers having their crops crushed at Pioneer Mill. An increase in the number of Haughton River growers sending their cane to Pioneer meant the factory was supplied by 142 growers compared to 135 in 1913 (see Table 8.2), although it crushed less cane (see Table 8.3), mainly because these new growers had smaller crops. Kalamia Mill also handled less cane in 1914, although it was not possible to determine the cause, for the factory's list of growers could not be found. However, despite this absence of information, it was possible to discover important developments concerning Kalamia Mill from the material still in existence.

Henry Gordon Bell, the Manager of Kalamia, had informed the Melbourne Office of Australian Estates in early 1914 that if the growers planted much more cane, Kalamia Mill may not be able to crush it all. Bell suggested that the new mill at Inkerman could relieve Kalamia by "taking some of the farmers' cane furthestest away from our end"; a reference to Kalamia suppliers who were located at Jarvisfield and Lower Jarvisfield. The Melbourne Office of Australian Estates replied to Bell's thoughts by stating that it was trying to avoid such an arrangement.⁵⁸ Indeed, this suggestion by Bell and possibly his close association with John Drysdale over many years led Australian Estates to dispense with his services in late April 1914. The Melbourne Office reported to the London Board this action was taken because:

For some time past, we have had much reason to be dissatisfied with the lack of candour and attention by Mr. Bell of our interests.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ John Drysdale to Mr. Nuttall, Rita Island, 25 November 1913, J.C.U., PMR/LB/40, p. 123. The same letter was also sent to nineteen other farmers as listed on the copy of the above mentioned letter.

⁵⁷ N.Q.R., 12 January 1914, p. 63; N.Q.R., 31 July 1916, p. 49.

⁵⁸ The Manager, A.E.M. Co., Melbourne, to H.G. Bell, Kalamia Mill, Ayr, 9 April 1914. (Loose letter, Kalamia Mill, Ayr.)

⁵⁹ The Manager, A.E.M. Co., Melbourne, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, 30 April 1914, M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book No. 18, p. 153.

Shortly after Bell's sacking John Drysdale retired from his supervisory position at Kalamia Estate, thus ending fifteen years association between the two firms.⁶⁰ Henry Gordon Bell became John Drysdale's Manager at Inkerman Mill.

Bell's replacement at Kalamia was Alexander Cruickshank, a miller who had worked in the Fijian sugar industry. Cruickshank was faced with the task of implementing the decision by Australian Estates to further improve the efficiency and capacity of their mill. Australian Estates believed it was necessary to undertake further capital expenditure so soon after the expense of upgrading the mill in 1911 and 1912,⁶¹ because it needed to improve the capacity of their factory in order to cope with the expanding crops that were likely to be planted in the future. This was necessary, the London Board decided, as it was important to keep everything up to date with regard to their mills so as to give no loophole to cane growers to complain that the firm could not provide proper crushing facilities.⁶² In addition, Australian Estates believed they had to pay too high a price for cane because of John Drysdale's unsatisfactory negotiations with the district's farmers.⁶³ The Melbourne Office of Australian Estates believed the only way to ensure they maintained their profits was to decrease the quantity of cane required to make one ton of sugar, achievable only by improving the efficiency of their mill.⁶⁴

The outcome of this decision to improve the efficiency of Kalamia was the installation of new vacuum pans, triple effets and Babcock

⁶⁰ The Manager, A.E.M. Co., Melbourne, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, 11 June 1914, M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book No. 18, p. 212.

⁶¹ In 1911 a new weighbridge shed was built at Kalamia (N.Q.R., 7, August 1911, p. 83). This was followed in 1912 by the addition of a fourth crushing mill (N.Q.R., 9 December 1912, p. 21).

⁶² Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, to The Manager, A.E.M. Co., Melbourne, 11 December 1914, A.N.U., Archives of Business and Labour, A.E.R. 165/143, Mail Letterbook 8, p. 368.

⁶³ Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, to The Manager, A.E.M. Co., Melbourne, 27 March 1914, A.N.U., Archives of Business and Labour, A.E.R. 165/142, Mail Letterbook 7, p. 186.

⁶⁴ The Manager, A.E.M. Co., Melbourne, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, 21 March 1912, M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book No. 16, p. 292.

boilers in the factory after the end of the crushing in 1914.⁶⁵ These additions substantially expanded the size of Kalamia and continued its modernization. Improvements in the mill were also accompanied by the extension of Kalamia's tramline system into the Lower Jarvisfield locality, after Australian Estates agreed to a request from a deputation of farmers in that locality in August 1914 to relieve them of the need to transport their cane the considerable distance to the mill's tramline at Norham.⁶⁶ This farmers' request was agreed to particularly quickly by the London Board of Australian Estates, for they believed the newly formed Pioneer Sugar Mills Ltd.⁶⁷ was planning to construct a tramline into the Lower Jarvisfield to ensure all the cane from that area was treated at Inkerman Mill.⁶⁸ However, it is debatable if John Drysdale would have considered such a move. Drysdale Bros. had just incurred considerable expense in building Inkerman Mill and expanding their tramline to Rita Island and had agreed to finance the building of a tramway in the Haughton River District (see Chapter 8.5 for a full discussion). Whatever the case, Australian Estates proceeded with the construction of the Lower Jarvisfield tramline in early 1915.

If Australian Estates expected to capitalize immediately on their investment in the new tramline into the Lower Jarvisfield locality by attracting farmers to supply Kalamia Mill, their hopes were dashed by the problems of 1915. The Lower Burdekin (and other districts in Queensland) were subjected to a severe drought. Only 261 mm of rain fell at Ayr during the year. Accompanying the low rainfall were swarms of grasshoppers and a shortage of labour, particularly in the latter half of

⁶⁵ The Manager, A.E.M. Co., Melbourne, to Alexander Cruickshank, Kalamia Mill, Ayr, 17 December 1914 (Loose letter, Kalamia Mill, Ayr); A.S.J., 4 February 1915, p. 813.

⁶⁶ Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, to The Manager, A.E.M. Co., Melbourne, 21 August 1914, A.N.U., Archives of Business and Labour, A.E.R., 165/142, Mail Letterbook 7, p. 285.

⁶⁷ Formed in September 1914, Pioneer Sugar Mills Ltd. assumed control of the assets of the two mills, but Drysdale Bros. & Co. retained the unsold freehold lands and stock until 1938, when both companies were merged (Connolly, John Drysdale and the Burdekin, pp. 142, 143, 180).

⁶⁸ The Manager, A.E.M. Co., Melbourne, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, 1 October 1914, M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book No. 18, p. 366.

the year, caused by men going to fight in World War I.⁶⁹

The drought of 1915 had a significant impact on the season's crushing with Kalamia and Pioneer Mill processing much reduced crops (see Table 8.3). Moreover, low rainfall meant many of the newly settled farmers on the southern side of the Burdekin River, who had not obtained irrigation plants, experienced a loss of their year's crop.⁷⁰ Consequently, Inkerman Mill did not crush in 1915. The settlers with harvestable cane sent it to be treated at Pioneer Mill, as did the farmers at Jarvisfield and Rita Island.

Although 1915 was a drought year and thus somewhat unrepresentative, it is the first year in this period under discussion when a list of growers is available for both Pioneer and Kalamia. Thus, the lists were used to construct Figure 8.3, in an attempt to provide a visual impression of the spatial changes that had occurred with regard to the location of farmers supplying both mills between 1912 and 1915.

A comparison of Figures 8.3 and 7.11 reveals that in 1915, as in 1912, most of Pioneer's farmers remained situated at Pioneer Estate, Airville, Mirrigan, Maidavale and Macdesme. Smaller groups of farmers at Labatt Lagoon, Colevale and Drynie also continued to be Pioneer suppliers. The expansion in the number of sugar growers in the Haughton River District, particularly on the western bank of the Haughton River is clearly visible when both maps are compared. An examination of both maps also reveals that in 1915, as in 1912, most of Kalamia's growers remained located at Airdmillan, Ivanhoe, Norham and on Kalamia Estate, although as previously speculated, suppliers of the mill were now situated at Jarvisfield and Lower Jarvisfield. Indeed, thirteen growers from Jarvisfield and Lower Jarvisfield send their cane to Kalamia for crushing in 1915, as compared to none in 1912 (see Table 8.5).

Even though there was an expansion in the number of Kalamia suppliers located at Jarvisfield and Lower Jarvisfield between 1912 and 1915, a comparison of the list of Kalamia suppliers for those two years reveals an apparent decline in the number of growers sending their cane

⁶⁹ N.Q.R., 22 February 1915, p. 22; N.Q.R., 8 March 1915, p. 81; N.Q.R., 26 July 1915, p. 16; N.Q.R., 23 August 1915, p. 37; N.Q.R., 7 September 1915, p. 22; N.Q.R., 26 October 1915, p. 25; K.M.A., Letterbook, 1915-1924, p. 39.

⁷⁰ Cane Grower and Tropical Cultivator, 1 (1915): 22.

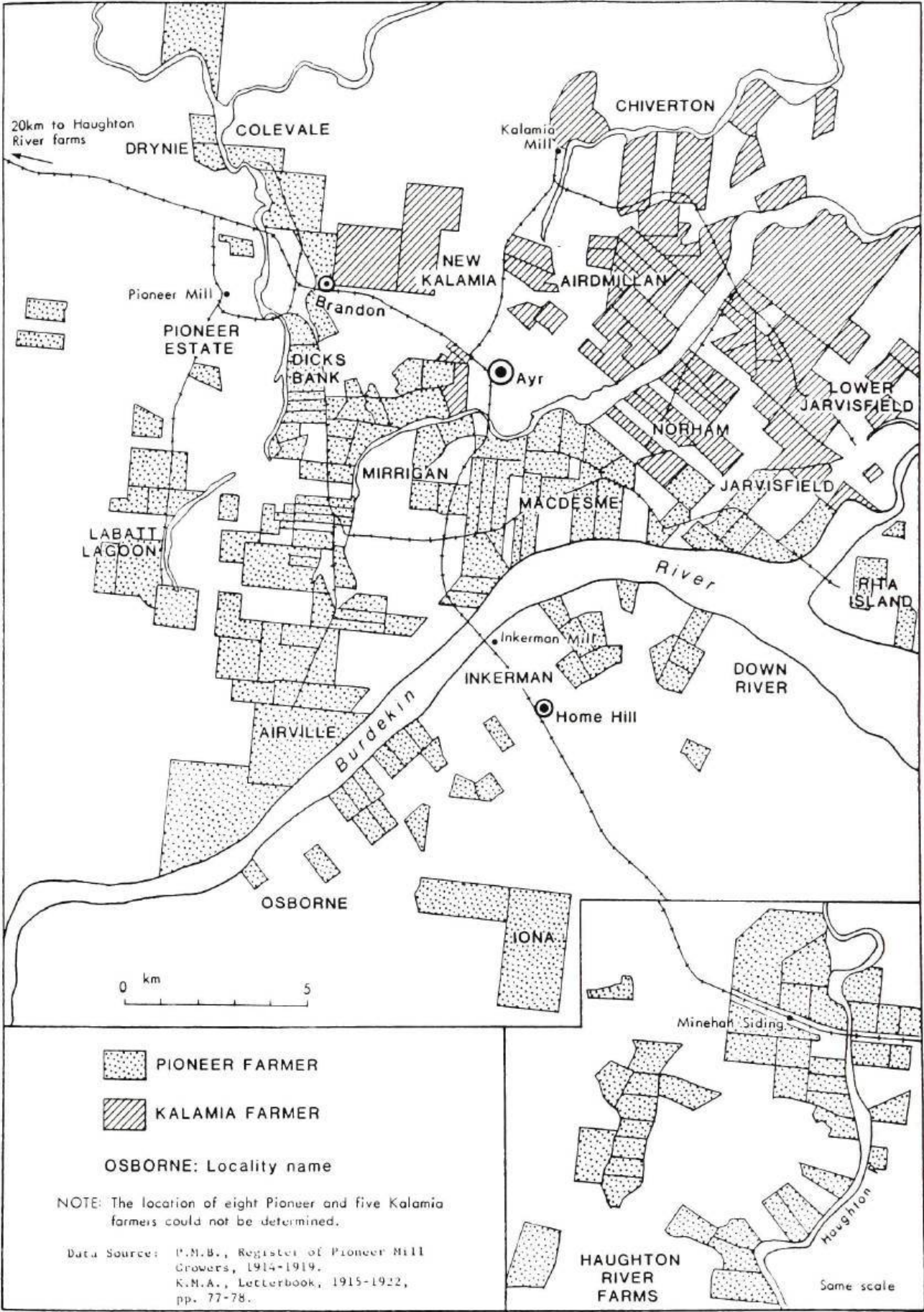


Figure 8.3 The Location of Farmers Supplying Pioneer and Kalamia Mills, 1915.

Table 8.5. The Number of Suppliers per Locality in Kalamia Mill's Catchment Area, 1912, 1915, 1916, 1919 and 1920

Locality	1912	1915	1918	1919	1920
Kalamia Estate ¹	8	5	8	5	6
Airdmillan	20	24	25	27	28
Ivanhoe/Norham ²	20	15	15	21	19
Jarvisfield/Lower Jarvisfield	0	13	20	17	19
Chiverton	4	1	1	6	6
Mirrigan/Macdesme	9	0	1	0	0
Ayr	4	4	4	3	3
Unknown	1	2	2	9	6
TOTAL	66	64	76	88	87

Notes: 1. Refers to farms leased from Australian Estates at Kalamia Estate and New Kalamia.

2. Includes farmers at Seaforth.

Source: Constructed from lists of Kalamia Mill growers in K.M.A., Ledger Book, 1909-1915, pp. 351-353; K.M.A., Letterbook, 1914-1922, pp. 77-78, P.M.B., Register of Pioneer Mill Growers, 1914-1919 (contains a list of Kalamia growers who supplied Pioneer Mill in 1919), and K.M.A., List of Individual Tonnage and Average C.C.S. of every Kalamia supplier, 1920, after reference to A.S.C., Rate Books, 1913-1920, Q.S.A., LAN/DF 4863 - LAN/DF 4875, and oral interviews.

to the mill from all other localities, except at Airdmillan. In all instances, with the exception of Macdesme and Mirrigan, the apparent decline was a result of the 1915 drought causing some farmers to have unharvestable cane. These growers do not appear in the 1915 list of Kalamia suppliers. However, the reduction in the number of Kalamia growers at Macdesme and Mirrigan was not caused by the 1915 drought. It appears Drysdale Bros. were able to influence some Kalamia growers at Macdesme and Mirrigan to send their cane to Pioneer, for an examination of the list of suppliers to Pioneer Mill in 1914 and 1915 reveals the names of farmers who appeared on Kalamia's list of suppliers in 1912. There is little wonder that Australian Estates had become wary of the intention of Drysdale Bros. Indeed, Australian Estates by mid-1915 had decided it was impossible to continue working in conjunction with Drysdale Bros. and were dealing with their own business as suited them best.⁷¹

As mentioned above, the number of Kalamia growers at Airdmillan in 1915 was higher than that in 1912. This was in contrast to the lower number of Kalamia growers in all other localities in 1915 as compared to 1912. Such an anomaly occurred because some of the new settlers on the subdivisions of the last section of Airdmillan Estate were finally able to grow cane, for the restrictions imposed by John Drysdale on the amount of cane grown at Airdmillan in the late 1900s⁷² were obviously lifted following the opening of Inkerman Mill. In contrast, other localities such as Ivanhoe and Norham were already almost fully occupied in 1912 by sugar growers (see Figure 7.11). Thus, there was little space left for any new farmers wishing to start sugar growing. Subsequently, the drought of 1915 which resulted in some farmers not harvesting cane, gave the impression of an apparent decline in the number of Kalamia growers in those localities. At Airdmillan, however, any drop in the number of farmers through the drought was offset by the expansion in the number of sugar growers between 1912 and 1914.

Despite the drought of 1915, enough sugar-cane was planted to ensure that all mills crushed in 1916. Pioneer was supplied by 168 growers, one less than 1915, but this did not include the Inkerman growers from the southern side of the Burdekin River. The maintenance of the number of Pioneer suppliers in 1916 at the 1915 level was a

⁷¹ The Manager, A.E.M. Co., Melbourne, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, 28 May 1915, M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book No. 18, p. 233.

⁷² Q.P.P., 2 (1911-1912): Ev. M. Coyne, p. 1139, Q.1059.

result of a further increase in the number of Haughton River growers sending their cane to the mill and the diversion of all the cane grown at Jarvisfield and Rita Island to Pioneer instead of Inkerman (see Table 8.2).

After not crushing in 1915, Inkerman resumed operations in 1916, although only supplied by sixty-three growers. Of these growers, twenty had supplied Pioneer in 1915, but the remainder would not have been entirely new farmers growing cane on land previously uncultivated with the crop. Most probably would have supplied Inkerman in 1914, but due to the drought in 1915, many would have had no harvestable cane. Spatially, nearly all of the 1916 suppliers of Inkerman were concentrated in the following localities - Inkerman, Osborne and Down River (see Table 8.6).

Kalamia was supplied by seventy-six growers in 1916, which was twelve more than 1915 (see Table 8.5). This increase probably represented a return to the pre-drought number of Kalamia growers. However, at such localities as Chiverton, Ivanhoe/Norham and Macdesme/Mirrigan there were still fewer Kalamia suppliers in 1916, than in 1912. In the former three areas this was probably a result of some farmers not planting at all in 1915 because of the drought, but in the latter two localities it highlighted Australian Estates' inability or unwillingness to convince former growers to return to supplying their mill.

As mentioned earlier, the 1916 season was interrupted by a stoppage, of several weeks' duration, caused by farmers protesting against the Dickson Award. Consequently, Inkerman and Pioneer Mills failed to handle 12,000 tons of cane that had been grown for the factories.⁷³ The amount of cane grown for Kalamia Mill in 1916 that remained unharvested at the end of the season could not be located. However, it is reasonable to assume that the mill had also been unable to crush all their growers' crops. This standover cane, in conjunction with the substantial plantings of 1916, ensured there was a large crop to be harvested in the following year. Indeed, the three Lower Burdekin mills crushed nearly 250,000 tons of cane in 1917. This was a record for the district (see Table 8.3).

To handle the large crops, John Drysdale again sent cane grown at

⁷³ Ev. C.S. Wynter, Cane Inspector, in A.B. Piddington et al., "Evidence of the Royal Commission on the Sugar Industry, 1920", p. 377.

Table 8.6. The Number of Suppliers per Locality in Inkerman Mill's Catchment Area, 1916, 1917 and 1919

Locality	1916	1917	1919
Inkerman	22	39	39
Osborne	19	35	36
Down River	16	27	23
Iona	2	15	13
Bowen Line	1	22	20
Fredericksfield	0	3	6
Gumlu	1	8	12
Jarvisfield/Rita Island	0	28(0) ¹	22(0)
Macdesme/Mirrigan	0	22(4)	18(7)
Haughton River	0	1(21)	0(32)
UNKNOWN	2	18	15
TOTAL	63	218(25)	204(39) ²

Notes: (1) Figures in brackets refer to the number of partial suppliers of Inkerman Mill.

(2) Does not include the seventy-eight growers who had their crops partially crushed at Inkerman.

Source: Constructed from lists of Inkerman Growers found in P.M.B., Register of Pioneer Mill Growers, 1914-1919 (contained the 1916 list of Inkerman Mill suppliers), J.C.U., PMR/[M/P] Box, Folio 1, Article 10: List of Inkerman Mill cane suppliers for the 1917 season, and I.M.C., List of Inkerman Mill Growers, 1919, after reference to A.S.C., Rate Books, 1916-1920, Q.S.A., LAN/DF 4857-4925, and oral interviews.

localities on the northern side of the Burdekin River (e.g. Macdesme, Haughton River, Jarvisfield) to be crushed at Inkerman Mill. This practice continued into the mid-1920s and created a situation where names of growers appeared on both the lists of suppliers to Pioneer and Inkerman Mills. To simplify this situation, so as to allow comparisons to be made between years, a grower was termed a "full" supplier of either mill for a particular year if over seventy per cent of their crop was crushed at the factory. Farmers who had less than thirty per cent of their yearly crop crushed at either Pioneer or Inkerman were classified as partial suppliers. The number of partial suppliers to both mills between 1917 and 1920 is shown in brackets in Tables 8.2 and 8.6. In the years 1918 to 1920 when the list of Inkerman growers could not be located, the number of "full" and partial suppliers to Pioneer Mill at localities where there were common growers was estimated. This estimation was undertaken after consulting Table 8.6, which provided the tonnage of cane crushed at Inkerman Mill between 1916 and 1920, classified according to the locality from where the cane was cultivated and, after considering the classification of a grower in the previous year.

The diversion of cane grown at localities on the northern side of the Burdekin River to be crushed at Inkerman swelled the number of growers who had their total crop processed at the factory in 1917. However, there was also an increase in the number of farmers supplying Inkerman Mill from localities south of the Burdekin River. Some of this increase occurred because previously settled farmers at Inkerman, Osborne and Down River, who did not plant or lost crops due to the drought of 1915, had cane ready for the 1917 crushing. In addition, many new growers sent cane to Inkerman Mill in 1917. Most of these suppliers were located at Iona, Fredericksfield, Gumlu and an area called the Bowen Line (see Table 8.6 and Figure 8.4). Much of this country had been opened to settlement later than the areas at Inkerman, Osborne and Down River (see Chapter 7.3.3 for a full discussion). As such, the new settlers would not have had crops ready for harvesting until 1917, particularly considering that many may have lost their cane in 1915, forcing them to replant in 1916.

As mentioned above, the pattern established in 1917 of growers from localities north of the Burdekin River having their cane crushed at Inkerman, continued during the latter years of the 1910s. However, the percentage of the total amount of cane crushed at Inkerman that came from localities on the northern side of the Burdekin River was not consistent and appeared to alter depending on the overall size of the

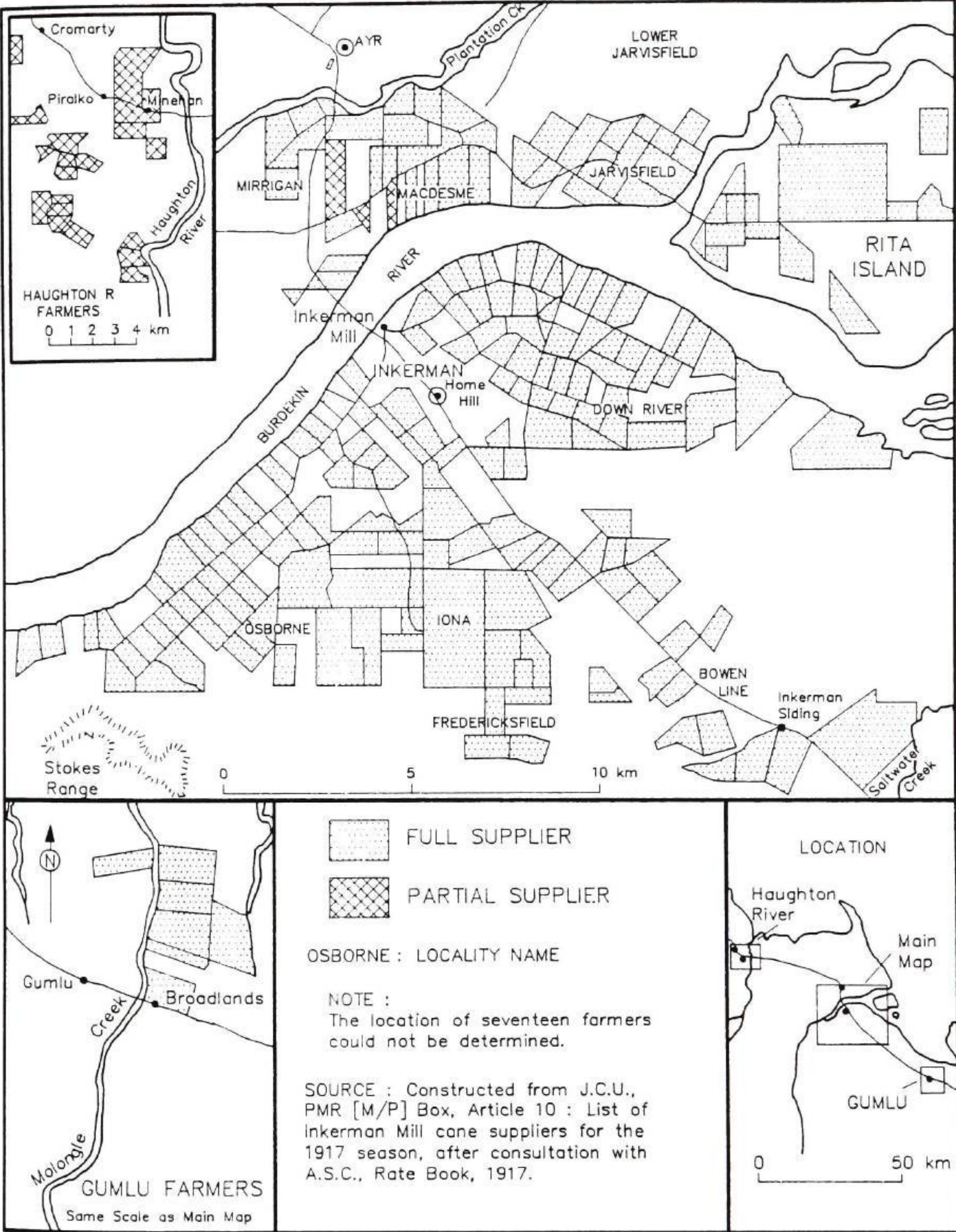


Figure 8.4 The Location of Farmers Supplying Inkerman Mill, 1917

district's crop (see Table 8.7). Indeed, John Drysdale in the late 1910s tended to operate Inkerman and Pioneer Mills more as one unit, rather than two separate factories.

Besides the crushing of cane grown at localities north of the Burdekin River at Inkerman Mill, what were the other features of the spatial organization of the sugar industry on the Lower Burdekin in the late 1910s? Firstly, reference to Tables 8.2, 8.5 and 8.6 reveals that between 1917 and 1920 there was no change in the localities from which the three mills drew their supply of cane. Pioneer continued to be supplied by growers situated mainly at Airville, Labatt Lagoon, Maidavale and the Haughton River, while most of Kalamia's farmers remained located at Airdmillan, Ivanhoe/Norham and Jarvisfield/Lower Jarvisfield. Similarly, even though only being able to locate the 1919 list of Inkerman suppliers, it appears that after the appearance of Inkerman growers in 1917 at such localities as Iona, Fredericksfield and the Bowen Line, there was no further expansion of sugar cultivation to other localities on the southern side of the Burdekin River.

This unchanging mix of localities from which the three mills drew their supply of cane in the late 1910s, occurred despite the provision under the Regulation of Sugar Cane Prices Act of 1915 which allowed growers to give notice to the Central Cane Prices Board if they wished to reassign their land to another mill, provided they were not bound by an agreement to supply a particular mill.⁷⁴ On the Lower Burdekin, the agreements between millers and farmers which John Drysdale had introduced in 1912, expired in 1915. However, during the late 1910s there was no evidence to suggest that any Lower Burdekin growers sought to have their lands reassigned to another mill or that the millers attempted to influence farmers to have their lands reassigned. Indeed, according to the Manager of Kalamia Mill, Australian Estates after 1915 refused to accept cane from any new grower, because Kalamia Mill was experiencing difficulty in crushing the amount of cane grown for it in a favourable season.⁷⁵ It is reasonable to assume John Drysdale was also unwilling to encourage any Kalamia grower to reassign to either Pioneer or Inkerman Mills, given that both factories were fully supplied.

The second main feature of the spatial organization of the sugar

⁷⁴ Q.G.G., 105 (1915): 983 [Clause 5 (2)].

⁷⁵ Ev. Alexander Cruickshank, in A.B. Piddington et al., "Evidence of the Royal Commission on the Sugar Industry, 1920", p. 367.

Table 8.7. Tons of Cane Crushed at Inkerman Mill Classified
by the Localities from which it was Harvested, 1916-1920

Locality	1916	1917	1918	1919	1920
South of the Burdekin R.	36681 (100)	54419(52)	94539(70)	21723(53)	33022(58)
Jarvisfield/ Rita Island	0	40000(38)	38371(29)	11855(29)	20631(37)
Mirrigan/ Macdesme	0	3750 (4)	1305(.99)	1010 (2)	2856 (5)
Haughton River	0	6400 (6)	81(.01)	987 (2)	0
TOTAL	36681	104569	134296 ²	41368 ³	56507

- NOTES: (1) The figure in brackets refers to the tonnage grown at each locality as a percentage of the total crop crushed at Inkerman.
- (2) An extra 31,000 tons grown for Inkerman Mill was sent to Proserpine Mill for crushing.
- (3) Includes the 5793 tons of cane grown for Kalamia Mill which was crushed at Inkerman.

Source: I.M.C., Crushing Figures for Inkerman Mill, 1914-1967.

industry on the Lower Burdekin in the late 1910s was the lack of change in the number of growers in each locality after 1917. An examination of Tables 8.2, 8.5 and 8.6 reveals that in most localities the number of growers who supplied each mill remained at the same level reached in 1917, or fluctuated only slightly. There were, however, some exceptions. Numbers of tenant farmers on Pioneer Estate in 1920 were greater than 1917, a consequence no doubt of Drysdale Bros. leasing further parts of their lands to interested settlers, while the increase in the number of Kalamia growers at Chiverton was a result of new settlers on the section of Chiverton Estate subdivided in the mid-1910s turning to cane cultivation. The small increases in the number of growers at Gumlu and Fredericksfield occurred most likely because farmers at both localities began sugar cultivation due to the lack of any other viable agricultural pursuit.

Decreases in the number of sugar growers at this time are only slight, but one instance does need examining. On Kalamia Estate, eight tenant farmers supplied Kalamia Mill in 1916. This number had dropped to six in 1920, because Australian Estates had recommenced its own sugar cultivation on Kalamia Estate in 1919.⁷⁶ Indeed, the amount of cane cultivated by Australian Estates at Kalamia rose from 70 acres in 1921 to 319 acres by 1930. Consequently, there were only four tenant farmers on Kalamia Estate by 1930.⁷⁷ The willingness of Australian Estates to grow its own cane again suggests they decided either their lands would be better farmed by themselves or they had difficulty in attracting tenants. If the latter was the reason, then it contrasts with the ease with which Drysdale Bros. could lease parts of their estate lands to settlers in the 1910s and 1920s, including sections on the company's holdings at Inkerman.⁷⁸ Furthermore, if Australian Estates was having difficulty in attracting tenants in the 1910s, it made no attempt to sell parts of Kalamia Estate that were suitable for sugar growing. However, Australian

⁷⁶ Ev. Alexander Cruickshank in A.B. Piddington et al., "Evidence of the Royal Commission on the Sugar Industry, 1920", p. 366.

⁷⁷ K.M.A., Letterbook, 1915-1923, pp. 344-45; 400-401; 465-466; K.M.A., Ledger Book, 1924-1928, pp. 34-35; N.Q.R., 9 March 1925, p. 89; N.Q.R., 11 October 1926, p. 40; R.H. Farrar, "Manager's Annual Report for Kalamia Mill, 1930", A.N.U., Archives of Business and Labour, A.E.R. 158/190.

⁷⁸ Lessees on Drysdale Bros.' land at Inkerman paid 1s. per ton of cane delivered by way of annual rent. (John Drysdale to the Under Secretary, Treasury Department, 10 May 1918, J.C.U., PMR/[C.T/1] Box 8, Article 37). Most of this land was sold to the tenants in the early 1920s (see T.T.O., Vol. 205/221).

Estates did dispose of 2,000 acres of estate lands which were more suited to grazing in 1916 in an effort to reduce Federal and State land taxes.⁷⁹ A further 1,800 acres of estate lands at New Kalamia which were not entirely suited to cane growing were sold to Messrs. Cameron and Irving in the early 1930s.⁸⁰

The final main feature of the spatial organization of the sugar industry on the Lower Burdekin between 1918 and 1920 was that the yearly increase in the total number of sugar growers in the district that had occurred between 1905 and 1915 no longer continued. This assessment, however, is based on incomplete data, as not all the lists of suppliers to the three mills at this time could be located. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to assume that the analysis of the situation is correct, for as discussed above, there was no expansion of sugar cultivation in this period to new localities on the Lower Burdekin and that within the localities where sugar was cultivated, there was only a slight increase in some cases in the number of farmers supplying each mill.

Why was there so little expansion in the Lower Burdekin sugar industry in the late 1910s? Firstly, with regard to the absence of sugar growers in new localities, it is reasonable to argue that the areas on the Lower Burdekin not occupied by farmers in the late 1910s in most instances were not suitable for sugar growing, either because of their distance to the existing tramways or physical properties. If the northern side of the Burdekin River is considered initially, localities to the north of Colevale, Drynie, and Chiverton and east of Lower Jarvisfield and the eastern section of Rita Island were covered in salt flats and mangroves (see Figure 3.2). Much of the country west of Pioneer Estate, Labatt Lagoon and Airville was considered to be inferior and more suited to grazing, while the land close to the Burdekin River upstream from Airville, although obviously suited to agriculture as shown in the 1950s,⁸¹

⁷⁹ Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, to the Manager, A.E.M. Co., Melbourne, 6 April 1916, A.N.U., Archives of Business and Labour, A.E.R., 165/143, Mail Letterbook No. 8, p. 141; T.T.O., Vols. 190/1-2; 201/177-181.

⁸⁰ R.H. Farrar, "Manager's Annual Report for Kalamia Mill, 1930", A.N.U., Archives of Business and Labour, A.E.R., 158/190; T.T.O., Vols. 201/179-180; 286/42-44.

⁸¹ Between 1949 and 1956 irrigation settlements were established upstream on the Burdekin River at Clare, Millaroo and Dalbeg. Tobacco was mainly cultivated, but it proved to be unviable. It was replaced by sugar-cane in the early 1960s. For details on this topic see E.M. Driscoll, The Irrigation Settlements of the Lower Burdekin, Queensland

was in the late 1910s a long way from Pioneer Mill's tramway and still assessed as being inferior for it was held as grazing blocks. On the southern side of the Burdekin River there could be no agricultural expansion south of Osborne and Fredericksfield due to Stokes Range and poorly drained country, while to the east of Down River and the Bowen Line localities there were saline coastal flats and mangroves (see Figure 3.2).

Although there existed a lack of new localities where sugar-cane could be cultivated on the Lower Burdekin in the late 1910s, there was still suitable agricultural land in the district in localities where cane was already grown. For instance, Hilton Estate and larger blocks and farms at Iona, Airville and Mirrigan remained intact. Therefore, the unavailability of appropriate land in localities suited to cane growing was a second reason which contributed to the "status quo" in the Lower Burdekin sugar industry between 1917 and 1920. However, even if suitable land was available, there was no guarantee that the new settlers would have engaged in sugar cultivation, given the difficulties associated with the industry in the late 1910s (i.e. below world parity sugar prices, rising labour costs, industrial disputes) and the Lower Burdekin millers' unwillingness to accept cane from new growers.

The lack of new localities where intending farmers could settle was particularly disadvantageous to any future expansion contemplated by Australian Estates. An examination of Figure 8.3 reveals that Kalamia growers even in 1915 were situated in most areas on the north-eastern side of the Burdekin River where it was possible to grow cane at the time. A few new farmers for the mill could possibly have been located near Ayr, Airdmillan, or at the north-eastern part of Lower Jarvisfield, but beyond these sites, Kalamia's catchment area was restricted to the north and east by coastal swamps and mangroves and to the west and south by Pioneer Mill's farmers. In contrast, Pioneer Sugar Mills Ltd. had a much larger catchment area. By 1920 the Company was receiving cane from as far northwards as Cromarty Siding and southwards to Gumlu. The existence of so many growers in such varied localities was bound to cause problems, particularly over the transport of cane to the mills. Indeed, it was the problem of inadequate transport facilities that caused the Haughton River farmers in the 1910s to seek the building of a new mill in their district. Like the farmers at Macdesme in the 1900s,

(Liverpool: Department of Geography, University of Liverpool, 1970) and Lewis, *Clare Centenary*, pp. 29-32.

the Haughton River growers asserted they were being disadvantaged by being so far from Pioneer Mill, and that they feared Pioneer Sugar Mills Ltd. would fail to crush all their cane in a good season. The action by the Haughton River sugar growers to alleviate their problem will now be examined.

8.5 A FOURTH MILL FOR THE DISTRICT

In 1906 farmers in the Haughton River District managed to supply Pioneer Mill with 183 tons of cane. This amount had risen to 7,938 tons in 1913,⁸² despite John Drysdale's attempts in 1908 to impose a limit on the area cultivated with sugar-cane by the growers.⁸³ To get their crops to Drysdale Bros.' factory, many of the Haughton River farmers were forced to cart their cane to the loading derricks at Cromarty, Minehan, Poopoonbah and Hodel Sidings, often for a considerable distance on poorly constructed roads. Their cane was then loaded onto railway carriages for transport to Pioneer Mill. This cartage cost growers 1s. 10d. per ton, but on the occasions it was necessary for John Drysdale to divert Haughton River cane to Inkerman Mill, the farmers were charged 2s. 3d.⁸⁴

Farmers in the Haughton River district before 1912, even though disadvantaged by having to pay cartage on their cane, had not agitated for improved facilities. However, members of the Haughton River Farmers' Association (H.R.F.A.) met in late 1913 to discuss a proposal to establish a tramline in the district.⁸⁵ This meeting heard that the Farmers' Association Committee had approached the Minister of Railways and asked that the area be surveyed in preparation for the construction of a tramline. However, the Minister replied that it was unlikely any tramline would be built in the district in the immediate future and that the farmers should approach their Local Authority to see if they could arrange a scheme whereby the facility was constructed.

⁸² Figures were obtained from J.C.U., PMR/[MISC/2] Box 11, Item 14 and P.M.B., Register of Pioneer Mill Growers, 1907-1914.

⁸³ P.D.T., 21 August 1908.

⁸⁴ Q.P.P., 3 (1917): Ev. J.G. Brown, Divisional Manager for Railways, Northern Division, p. 644, Q.12.

⁸⁵ N.Q.R., 8 December 1913, p. 81.

The next move of the H.R.F.A., after its first meeting in December 1913 to discuss improved tramline facilities in the district, is unclear. If the Association did approach their Local Authority, the Ayr Shire Council, there is no surviving documentation of such a meeting, as the Ayr Shire Council's records in this period only consist of a few ratebooks. However, it is certain that John Drysdale met a deputation of the Haughton River farmers in April 1914 about the possibility of constructing a tramline in the Haughton River district.⁸⁶ At this meeting, John Drysdale agreed to finance a 2 ft. gauge tramline through the district. A month later he entered into an agreement with the Haughton River Tramway Board; a group of farmers elected from those settled in the district to oversee the construction of the tramline. John Drysdale also consented to find all the tramline material and rolling stock necessary for the project, on the condition that Pioneer Sugar Mills Ltd. could deduct 1 s. 3d. per ton of cane from the payments to the Haughton River sugar growers who supplied their mills. This money would then be used to maintain the tramline and pay off the debt incurred by the growers with Pioneer Sugar Mills Ltd.⁸⁷

Even though John Drysdale agreed to finance a Haughton River tramline, it was never constructed using funds supplied by Pioneer Sugar Mills Ltd. According to John Drysdale, the project was abandoned due to difficulties in getting the construction material during World War I and the decision of the Central Cane Prices Boards to increase the price paid to farmers for cane.⁸⁸ The failure of Drysdale Bros. to build the tramline meant deputations of Haughton River farmers seeking improved tramline facilities for the district waited upon the Thuringowa Shire Council,⁸⁹ the Deputy Railway Commissioner, the Treasurer and Minister

⁸⁶ N.Q.R., 25 May 1914, p. 79.

⁸⁷ John Drysdale to James Griffith, Sec., Haughton River Farmers' Association, Minehan Siding, 22 May 1914, J.C.U., PMR/LB/40, p. 462. Attached to this letter was a copy of a Memorandum of Agreement between Drysdale Bros. and Co. and the Haughton River Tramway Board.

⁸⁸ John Drysdale to the Secretary, Sugar Commission, 25 May 1916, Q.P.P., 2 (1916-1917): 1101.

⁸⁹ The Haughton River District was removed from the control of the Ayr Shire Council in 1916 (Q.G.G., 106 (1916): 1519).

for Railways throughout 1915, 1916 and early 1917.⁹⁰ The reward for such persistence was the Queensland Government's decision in August 1917 to appoint a Royal Commission to examine the matter of constructing a Branch line from the Townsville to Bowen Railway to run through the Haughton River District.

Evidence before the Royal Commission was heard in October 1917 from various persons associated with the proposed scheme, including John Drysdale, several Haughton River farmers and government officials. A month later the Commissioners recommended that a 3 ft. 6 in. gauge loop line traversing the Haughton River District from the Townsville to Bowen Railway, commencing at the Giru siding,⁹¹ should be built immediately. The Commission noted that the line was necessary, as the mode of transporting cane was by horse and wagon, a slow and expensive method which was not permitting the whole of the crop to be harvested and taking up so much time that the planting and cultivation of young cane was being neglected.⁹² Even though the project was recommended, the Queensland Government decided not to proceed with the construction of the tramline.

During the attempts to convince the Queensland Government to build a tramline through their district, representatives of the H.R.F.A. also appeared before the Board of Inquiry into the Sugar Industry in Queensland. When questioned by the Board of Inquiry, the witnesses representing the H.R.F.A. said the growers of the district were requesting a mill to be erected under the Sugar Works Act of 1911, where the government found all the money for the mill, as the farmers did not want to surrender their land as security. The mill was to be supplied by growers situated at the Haughton River, but farmers at Major Creek and Woodstock were prepared to grow cane for the factory if a short tramline was constructed towards their localities. Finally, the growers of the district were requesting a mill for they feared that John Drysdale in good

⁹⁰ N.Q.R., 30 August 1915, p. 58; N.Q.R., 4 December 1915, p. 18; N.Q.R., 3 March 1916, p. 24; N.Q.R., 8 May 1916, p. 34; N.Q.R., 19 December 1916, p. 92; N.Q.R., 15 January 1917, p. 22; W.N. Gillies et al., "Report of the Royal Commission appointed to Inspect and Report upon the Proposal to Construct a Branch Line from the Townsville-Bowen Railway (Haughton River)", Q.P.P., 3 (1917): 640.

⁹¹ First called Minkom Siding in 1914 (Q.G.G., 103 (1914): 2129), the place was re-named Giru in 1916 (Q.G.G., 106 (1916): 1301).

⁹² W.N. Gillies et al., "Report of the Royal Commission appointed to Inspect and Report upon the Proposal to Construct a Branch Line from the Townsville to Bowen Railway (Haughton River)", Q.P.P., 3 (1917): 641.

seasons would refuse to take all the cane from the Haughton River District, particularly as there was no agreement with the millowners to guarantee that they would take delivery of all of each season's crop.⁹³ However, John Drysdale in a letter to the Board of Inquiry stated there was "not at present any likelihood of the existing mills being unable to crush all the cane grown in the Haughton River District."⁹⁴

The Board of Inquiry recognized that the Haughton River sugar-cane farmers had some grounds for concern with respect to the future crushing of their crops, although it refused to recommend the building of a mill in the Haughton River district, mainly on the grounds that the area had such unreliable rainfall that precluded the regular growing of crops. However, the Board of Inquiry suggested that the wants of the Haughton River farmers would be satisfied for some years to come by the building of a tramline through the district.⁹⁵

The failure of the attempts to convince the Queensland Government to build a central mill in the Haughton River District or improve the locality's tramline facilities did not deter the Haughton River sugar growers in their efforts to find a solution to the problems with which they were confronted. Inadequate milling facilities on the Lower Burdekin had again become an issue. Farmers interviewed John Drysdale and requested that he should extend the capacity of Inkerman Mill. No answer to their inquiries could be located, but it is reasonable to assume that John Drysdale advised the growers that he would not contemplate such a request in view of the uncertainties surrounding the operation of the Local Cane Prices Boards (see Chapter 8.6 for a full discussion). At the same time calls for the resurrection of the Jarvisfield Central Mill or for the Queensland Government to shift a non-paying southern mill to the Lower Burdekin were made by the local branch of the U.G.C.A.,⁹⁶ an organization led by Peter Hoey and strongly supported by Kalamia Mill

⁹³ Summarized from the Evidence of Messrs. George Deane, W.E.G. Smith, Arthur Hughes and A. Brookes before the Sugar Board of Inquiry of 1916, Q.P.P., 2 (1916-1917): 1086-1101, Qs. 3361-3580.

⁹⁴ John Drysdale to the Secretary, Sugar Commission, 25 May 1916, Q.P.P., 2 (1916-1917): 1101.

⁹⁵ W.J. Short et al., "Report of the Board of Inquiry into the Sugar Industry in Queensland", Q.P.P., 2 (1916-1917): 854.

⁹⁶ Ev. Harold Christian, Ev. E.T. Bruce, in A.B. Piddington et al., "Evidence of the Royal Commission on the Sugar Industry, 1920", pp. 370, 371; N.Q.R., 31 December 1917, p. 23.

suppliers.⁹⁷ The Haughton River farmers, perhaps realizing they would receive support for any scheme to improve the milling facilities on the Lower Burdekin, began investigations into securing a mill for their district. These inquiries met with success quite quickly. In January 1918 a deputation from the H.R.F.A. advised the Minister for Agriculture that they had learnt that Invicta Mill at Bundaberg was available for purchase, because its owners, Buss Bros., were unable to secure adequate supplies of cane.⁹⁸ The Haughton River farmers sought government assistance in securing the removal of the mill to Giru.⁹⁹ The Minister for Agriculture promised nothing, but said he would bring their requests before the Queensland Government.

The Queensland Government refused to finance the Haughton River farmers' purchase of Invicta Mill. Furthermore, it would only approve the transfer of the mill from Bundaberg to the Haughton River district if a company had been duly registered and formed and that one third of the shares had been issued to persons who had entered into cane growing agreements with the new company and that the holders of these shares had paid the full amount of the capital on the shares.¹⁰⁰ Thus, the Haughton River farmers decided to form a company with a capital of around £100,000, for they announced they were seeking to raise £33,000.¹⁰¹

To raise the money the Haughton farmers agreed to a levy of 3s.6d. per ton on their future crops of cane in return for shares in the new company. Representatives of the H.R.F.A. throughout May 1918 also asked the suppliers of Pioneer and Inkerman Mills to agree to a levy of 1s. per ton of cane crushed for the next three years in return for shares in the new company. Consequently, the H.R.F.A. was able to secure over the £33,000 required to form their company.¹⁰² John Drysdale agreed to collect the levies for the Haughton farmers, although he

⁹⁷ N.Q.R., 11 September 1916, p. 25; Ev. A. Dean, in A.B. Piddington et al., "Evidence of the Royal Commission on the Sugar Industry, 1920", p. 362.

⁹⁸ For historical details on Invicta Mill before 1918 see Manning, In Their Own Hands, p. 164.

⁹⁹ N.Q.R., 7 January 1918, p. 22.

¹⁰⁰ Q.G.G., 103 (1914): 2203-4.

¹⁰¹ N.Q.R., 22 April 1918, p. 63.

¹⁰² N.Q.R., 20 May 1918, p. 33; N.Q.R., 27 May 1918, p. 18.

expressed concern about allowing the suppliers to his mills to agree to the levies, due to the indebtedness of so many of the farmers to Pioneer Sugar Mills Ltd.¹⁰³

With the money guaranteed the farmers approached the Federal Treasurer in October 1918 to obtain approval to form a new company for the purchase of the mill.¹⁰⁴ This permission was required because, as mentioned earlier, the Queensland Government had given a guarantee that no new mills would be erected during the duration of the 1918-1919 sugar agreement with the Commonwealth. However, the Haughton River growers had no problems obtaining approval for their project, as they were only re-erecting an existing mill. Once the approval was received, the Haughton Sugar Co. Ltd. was formed and registered in Townsville in early December. The new company's capital was listed as £105,000. A third of the £1 shares in the company were automatically issued to farmers likely to supply the mill in proportion to the acreage of land cultivated. They were to be paid for by levies set annually by the Directors, although the amount was not to exceed 3s. per ton of cane. The remainder of the shares were to be issued when the Directors considered it suitable.¹⁰⁵

The mill the Haughton farmers purchased was capable of handling over 70,000 tons of cane in a six month crushing season and it was fitted with the usual machinery, which included three sets of rollers, continuous subsidors and jelly tanks. According to a contemporary newspaper report, Invicta was noted throughout Queensland for its "high efficiency in juice extraction".¹⁰⁶ The farmers agreed to buy the factory for £55,000, of which £2,000 was to be paid initially, £8,000 in June 1920 and the balance in nine annual instalments of £5,000 each, with the first payment commencing on 31 December 1921.¹⁰⁷ In purchasing Invicta the Haughton farmers received not only the factory and machinery, but barracks, cook house, dining and other rooms to accommodate 120 men, cottages, engineer's residence and saw mill plant.

¹⁰³ John Drysdale to R. Walton, Minehan Siding, 24 March 1918, J.C.U., PMR/LB/44, p. 52.

¹⁰⁴ N.Q.R., 14 October 1918, p. 19.

¹⁰⁵ Articles of Association of the Haughton River Sugar Co. Ltd., Q.S.A., A/17865 No. 394/Book 1.

¹⁰⁶ N.Q.R., 16 September 1918, p. 74.

¹⁰⁷ N.Q.R., 2 February 1920, p. 19.

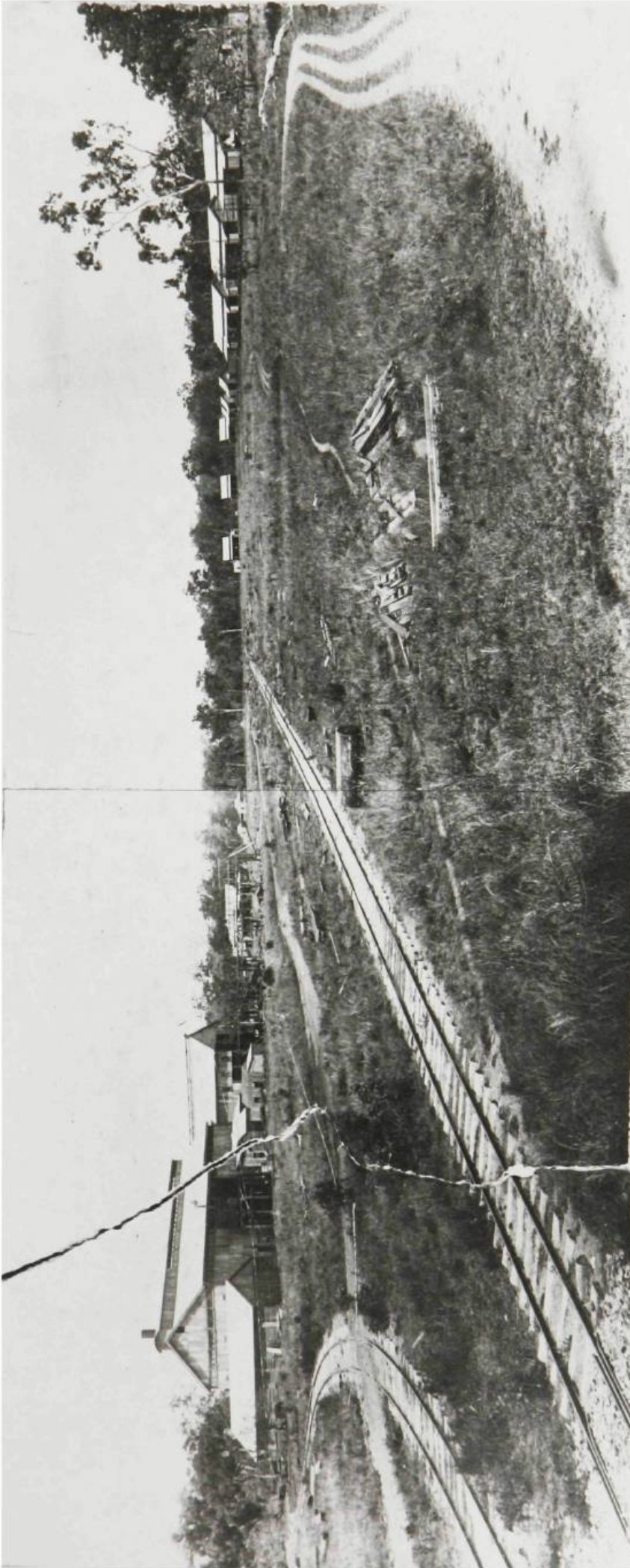


Plate 18 Invicta Mill near completion, 1920.

Photo: Courtesy of the Houghton Sugar Co., Giru.

Once the deposit was made on Invicta, the Directors of the Haughton Sugar Co. Ltd. called tenders for the removal and re-erection of the mill at Giru and for the clearing of the mill site. By March 1919 the contractors clearing the mill site¹⁰⁸ and Barbat and Sons, Engineers from Ipswich, had won the contract to move and re-erect Invicta Mill for £30,700.¹⁰⁹ The cost of the mill's removal was additional to its purchase price, so the Haughton Sugar Co. Ltd. was forced to canvass the district's farmers for funds to assist in the re-erection of the factory.¹¹⁰

Throughout 1919 Invicta Mill was dismantled and removed by train and steamer to Giru, where it was re-assembled on a block of land that had been reserved for a Central Sugar Mill, when the Haughton lands were opened to settlement in 1911.¹¹¹ During the re-erection of the factory, five new Babcock boilers, three vacuum pans and quadruple efferts (replacing the old style juice tanks) were installed to modernize the mill.¹¹² By November 1920 the re-construction of the mill was almost complete.¹¹³ All was progressing well in readiness for the mill's first crushing in its new location in 1921, except for the provision of a tramline in the district and rolling stock. The struggle to obtain a tramline in the Haughton River District and the impact of the establishment of a new mill on the Lower Burdekin, however, will be examined in the next chapter.

8.6 FARMER HARDSHIP

The purchase and re-erection of Invicta Mill at Giru was quite remarkable considering the financial hardships faced by the Lower Burdekin sugar cane growers in the 1910s. Some of the general problems causing financial difficulties for the industry have been reviewed earlier,

¹⁰⁸ Producers Review, 10 March 1919, p. 36.

¹⁰⁹ H.S.C.G., Agreement Between Mr. R. Walton, Haughton River Farmers' Association and Messrs. Barbat and Sons, Ipswich, 3 March 1919.

¹¹⁰ N.Q.R., 27 October 1919, p. 23.

¹¹¹ W.N. Gillies et al., "Report of the Royal Commission Appointed to Inspect and Report upon the Proposal to Construct a Branch Line from the Townsville to Bowen Railway (Haughton River)", Q.P.P., 3 (1917): 639.

¹¹² Delta Advocate, 22 September 1920 (newspaper cutting in the Humphrey MS.).

¹¹³ A.S.J., 15 November 1920, p. 481.

but this section will closely consider their impact on the Lower Burdekin farmers.

In the early 1910s the Lower Burdekin farmers were caught on what Shogren described as a "cost-price squeeze"¹¹⁴ between the millers, who offered them on average 24s.1d. for a ton of cane in 1914 compared to 25s.10d. in 1911 and the farm workers, whose wages had risen from 36s. in 1912 to 39s. in 1914.¹¹⁵ The problems of declining commodity prices and rising wages for the Lower Burdekin farmers were exacerbated in early 1915 by below average rainfall and plagues of grasshoppers. Particularly hard hit were the newly settled Inkerman and Haughton River growers. Many could not afford to pay the annual rent on their selections.¹¹⁶

As a consequence of the "cost-price squeeze" and the bad season in 1915, the Lower Burdekin farmers' debt to Pioneer Sugar Mills Ltd. increased from £35,514 in December 1914 to £63,705 in December 1915.¹¹⁷ Inkerman farmers were also heavily indebted to the Agricultural Bank.¹¹⁸ Suppliers of Kalamia Mill, particularly those just settled at the Lower Jarvisfield locality, were also probably indebted to Australian Estates and the Agricultural Bank for varying amounts. Despite such indebtedness, the farmers in early 1916 were possibly optimistic about reducing their debts, for the introduction of the Regulation of Sugar Cane Prices Act of 1915 at last guaranteed them an independent tribunal to fix the price they received for their cane.

Under the new legislation, millers and growers were given until late 1915 to apply for the formation of Local Boards. When the closing date

¹¹⁴ Shogren, "Agriculture: 1915-1927", p. 180.

¹¹⁵ J.H. Thornton, Sec., Lower Burdekin Farmers' Association, to Charles Collins M.L.A., 16 August 1915. Reproduced in Q.P.D., 120 (1915-1916): 466.

¹¹⁶ Horace McTower, Land Commissioner, Townsville, to the Under Secretary, Public Lands, Brisbane, 6 March 1916, Q.S.A., LAN 4857/DF 1185, In-letter 07185 of 1916.

¹¹⁷ See the "List of Advances to Farmers", in J.C.U., PMR/IAL/6, pp. 52-53.

¹¹⁸ L. Osborne, Sec., I.F.G.A., to the Hydraulic Engineer, Brisbane, 27 July 1914, Q.S.A., TRE/A446, In-letter 03765 of 1914 filed with In-letter 2449 of 1918; Extract from the Annual Report of the Land Commissioner for the Townsville Land Agent's District, Q.P.P., 2 (1916-1917): 557.

for applications was reached, the government had received requests to form Local Boards for both Kalamia and Pioneer Mills. The request to establish Pioneer's Local Board came from several Inkerman farmers, who supplied Pioneer in 1915. Under the impression that Inkerman Mill would not operate in 1916, these Inkerman growers thought their cane would again be processed at Pioneer. Despite opposition to this application by the regular suppliers of Pioneer, possibly the result of pressure from John Drysdale, the Inkerman growers would not withdraw their application.¹¹⁹ The request to form Kalamia's Local Board came from Australian Estates, not the farmers. However, until the Board met and retrospectively determined the price to be paid for cane in 1915, Australian Estates decided to withhold 1s.5d. per ton of cane on the agreed price between themselves and the growers. This action evoked an angry protest from the Lower Burdekin Farmers' Association, who argued that the farmers were struggling enough as a result of the drought and that this policy only added to the hardships.¹²⁰

Even though John Drysdale believed that the Pioneer Local Board would not meet, he was mistaken.¹²¹ In April 1916 it was decided that Pioneer growers in 1916 were to be paid according to the percentage of pure obtainable cane sugar (p.o.c.s.), which was to be ascertained by individual chemical analysis of a farmer's cane. Cane that had a sugar content of fifteen per cent p.o.c.s. was to receive 35s. per ton when the price of a ton of 94 n.t. sugar was £18. For every 1s. rise or fall in the price of a ton of 94 n.t. sugar there was to be a 1d. rise or fall in the price the growers received for fifteen per cent p.o.c.s. Cane that had a greater sugar content than fifteen per cent p.o.c.s. was to receive an extra 2s. per ton for every unit percentage higher. Similarly, cane of a lesser sugar content than fifteen per cent p.o.c.s. was to receive 2s. per ton less for every unit per cent lower down to eleven per cent p.o.c.s. Below this level, 3s. per ton was deducted for every unit per cent p.o.c.s. lower. Other parts of the award specified that the price of cane delivered to the mills would be 1s. per ton more than cane delivered on mill trucks, deductions would be made for burnt cane, certain varieties of

¹¹⁹ N.Q.R., 31 July 1916, p. 50; Q.P.P., 2 (1916-1917): Ev. Fred Margetts, p. 1289, Q.250.

¹²⁰ N.Q.R., 11 February 1916, p. 11. The C.S.R. Co. throughout Queensland in late 1915 also refused to pay the full amount of the agreed price to growers, until the Local Boards made their awards.

¹²¹ John Drysdale to the Sec., Central Cane Prices Board, Brisbane, 13 December 1915, J.C.U., PMR/LB/42, p. 255.

cane could not be cultivated and the Rita Island growers continued to be liable to pay an additional 1s. per ton for carriage of their cane on the millowner's tramline.¹²²

Kalamia's Local Award was almost identical to the award fixed for Pioneer, except provisions were made that in the event of the total amount of cane treated at the mill exceeding 50,000 tons, 1d. per ton would be paid in addition to the base price for every additional 1,000 tons treated and that if the amount crushed fell below 45,000 tons a deduction of 1d. per ton would be made from the base price for every 1,000 tons below that amount.

Both millers and growers on the Lower Burdekin did not approve of the awards and appealed against them.¹²³ In order to resolve the matter, the Central Cane Prices Board met in Ayr in June 1916 to hear new submissions. At these hearings, both Australian Estates and Pioneer Sugar Mills Ltd. argued that the use of the p.o.c.s. to pay for the farmers' cane was not possible, given their present staff of chemists and the configuration of the mills' machinery which did not allow the taking of juice samples.¹²⁴ The Central Cane Prices Board, however, was unconvinced by the arguments and confirmed that the district's growers should be paid on the basis of percentage p.o.c.s., although it changed p.o.c.s. to c.c.s. (commercial cane sugar). In addition, the Central Cane Prices Board ruled that Pioneer and Kalamia suppliers should receive 34s. and 31s. respectively instead of 35s. for a ton of cane that had fifteen per cent c.c.s.¹²⁵ This difference in the amount paid to Pioneer and Kalamia suppliers was considered most unsatisfactory by Australian Estates, who no doubt feared that their growers might try to have their lands reassigned to either Pioneer or Inkerman Mills.¹²⁶

Soon after the Central Cane Prices Board had issued its revised awards for the Lower Burdekin mills, Queensland's cane farmers began to refuse to harvest their crops in protest against the Dickson Award. As a

¹²² Q.G.G., 106 (1916): 1609.

¹²³ N.Q.R., 17 July 1916, p. 21.

¹²⁴ N.Q.R., 31 July 1916, p. 52; Connolly, John Drysdale and the Burdekin, p. 148.

¹²⁵ N.Q.R., 17 July 1916, p. 22.

¹²⁶ The Manager, A.E.M. Co., Melbourne, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, 12 July 1916, M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book No. 20, p. 37.

result of the growers' actions, sugar mills throughout Queensland, including the three factories on the Lower Burdekin, ceased operations.¹²⁷ However, as mentioned earlier the state's sugar mills resumed crushing well before the contentious issue of the Dickson Award had been resolved. On the Lower Burdekin the farmers agreed to recommence crushing in early October, but were faced with John Drysdale's refusal to re-open Inkerman Mill, unless the growers undertook to sign an agreement not to request a Cane Prices Board for the next three years. In return, John Drysdale offered a profit sharing scheme, to date retrospectively from 1 January 1915 for five years. Profits of the company were to be limited to ten per cent per annum on a capital of £380,000 and the amount to be spent out of profits for extensions and improvements on Pioneer and Inkerman Mills, together with depreciation, would be limited to two and a half per cent. The minimum price for cane was to be fixed at the old agreement or 30s. 5d. delivered to the mill. Any further profits were to be paid to the growers by an addition to the price per ton for their cane.¹²⁸

The above scheme was not the first time John Drysdale had proposed profit sharing arrangements with the farmers who supplied Pioneer and Inkerman Mills. A year earlier he had suggested continued payment for their cane under the old agreement, supplemented by a yearly bonus.¹²⁹ Growers refused his 1915 proposal and initially opposed his second offer.¹³⁰ However, enough farmers must have eventually signed the agreement, for Inkerman Mill began crushing in late October. Indeed, John Drysdale in early 1917 claimed that over two hundred growers had signed the agreement,¹³¹ although it appears he once again possibly used coercion to obtain his goals. One farmer, giving evidence before the Piddington Royal Commission stated:

An effort was being made by the mill [Inkerman] during that year to break down the Cane Prices Board. Anyone who signed an undertaking not to apply for a Cane Prices Board could get their cane harvested. Some of us said that we wanted to stick

¹²⁷ Connolly, John Drysdale and the Burdekin, p. 153; Brisbane Courier, 4 September 1916, p. 6.

¹²⁸ Connolly, John Drysdale and the Burdekin, p. 148.

¹²⁹ Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, to The Manager, A.E.M. Co., Melbourne, 2 December 1915, A.N.U., Archives of Business and Labour, A.E.R., 165/143, Mail Letterbook No. 8, p. 75.

¹³⁰ N.Q.R., 23 October 1916, p. 26.

¹³¹ John Drysdale to G.H. Pritchard, Brisbane, 14 January 1917, J.O.L., A.S.P.A.R., OM/BG/2/3: Drysdale Bros. File.

to the Cane Prices Board, and not one signed the undertaking. I can only ascribe the loss of my cane to the refusal to sign that undertaking. I was told I could get it crushed if I would sign the undertaking.¹³²

However, John Drysdale when interviewed by the Piddington Royal Commission denied that this was his policy. He stated that his Cane Inspector may have threatened such action, but without his authority. Indeed, John Drysdale stated he was only "too anxious to get all the cane crushed".¹³³

John Drysdale was not optimistic that his new agreement would be accepted by what he described as the "idiotic Price Board".¹³⁴ His assessment was correct, for the Central Cane Prices Board refused to approve Drysdale's scheme whereby his mills would operate outside the guidelines set out under the Regulation of Sugar Cane Prices Act of 1915. However, John Drysdale's tactics to defeat the Central Cane Prices Board did not stop at offering to share the mill's profits with the farmers. In January 1917 he advised the Queensland Government that Pioneer Sugar Mills Ltd. would not operate its factories in 1918. He gave two reasons: first, uncertainty as to what the Local Cane Prices Board would do in 1917; and second, the limited area that would be planted on the Lower Burdekin due to the present rate of wages forcing farmers to rely on their families to plant the cane, instead of employing extra men.¹³⁵ Upon hearing of Drysdale's statements the Premier of Queensland threatened to commandeer the mills on the Lower Burdekin to ensure that the farmers' cane was crushed.¹³⁶ The A.S.P.A., however, assured John Drysdale that Ryan was bluffing, as there was no War Precautions Act in Queensland to allow such an action and it was unlikely Ryan would be able to convince the Commonwealth to take control of the mills under

¹³² Ev. Harold Christian in A.B. Piddington et al., "Evidence of the Royal Commission on the Sugar Industry, 1920", p. 372.

¹³³ Ev. John Drysdale in A.B. Piddington et al., "Evidence of the Royal Commission on the Sugar Industry, 1920", p. 374.

¹³⁴ John Drysdale to G.H. Pritchard, Brisbane, 14 January 1917, J.O.L., A.S.P.A.R., OM/BG/2/3: Drysdale Bros. File.

¹³⁵ John Drysdale to G.H. Pritchard, 13 January 1917, J.O.L., A.S.P.A.R., OM/BG/2/3: Drysdale Bros. File; Brisbane Courier, 18 January 1917, p. 6.

¹³⁶ Brisbane Courier, 2 February 1917, p. 6.

the Federal War Precautions legislation.¹³⁷

Just over a month after John Drysdale's announcement, there appeared a notice in the Queensland Government Gazette listing the Local Sugar Cane Prices Boards which were to be constituted for 1917.¹³⁸ All the Lower Burdekin mills were listed as having Local Boards, for some of the growers who supplied Kalamia and Inkerman had requested that they be formed. However, the farmers who grew cane for Pioneer Mill had not asked for a Local Board,¹³⁹ but as explained G.H. Pritchard to John Drysdale, the Supreme Court in Queensland had declared:

once a Local Board is created it goes on interminably unless rescinded by the Governor in Council. As you already have a Local Board for Pioneer, it would appear that this Board still lives.¹⁴⁰

Prior to the sittings of the Local Boards, John Drysdale and the growers for both his mills arrived at an agreement that a base price of 38s.4d. was to be paid when the price of a ton of 94 n.t. raw sugar was £21 with a rise or fall of 1d. per ton for each shilling rise or fall in the price of raw sugar.¹⁴¹ This agreement was ratified by the Local Cane Prices Board when it met in Ayr in mid-April 1917.¹⁴² On the same day the first Inkerman Mill Award was approved. It was essentially the same as the Pioneer Mill Award, yet it established that the factory was separate from Pioneer Mill. This went against the efforts of John Drysdale who had tried during late 1916 to stop the growers at Inkerman applying for a Local Board by getting them to sign his profit sharing scheme and by arguing with the Central Cane Prices Board that there should be only one Board for both mills, as Inkerman was only an auxiliary mill to Pioneer.¹⁴³

Upon hearing of the Pioneer and Inkerman Awards, the Melbourne

¹³⁷ G.H. Pritchard to John Drysdale, 2 February 1917, J.O.L., A.S.P.A.R., OM/BG/2/3: Drysdale Bros. File.

¹³⁸ Q.G.G., 108 (1917): 564.

¹³⁹ G.H. Pritchard to John Drysdale, 20 January 1917, J.O.L., A.S.P.A.R., OM/BG/2/3: Drysdale Bros. File.

¹⁴⁰ G.H. Pritchard to John Drysdale, 24 January 1917, J.O.L., A.S.P.A.R., OM/BG/2/3: Drysdale Bros. File.

¹⁴¹ N.Q.R., 23 April 1917, p. 15.

¹⁴² Q.G.G., 108 (1917): 1382.

¹⁴³ N.Q.R., 31 July 1916, p. 48; John Drysdale to the Hon. Minister for Agriculture, 8 August 1916, J.C.U., PMR/LB/43, p. 87.

Office of Australian Estates declared they were amazed to learn that John Drysdale had agreed to pay for cane at a flat rate and accordingly sent him a telegram saying that the awards were ridiculous.¹⁴⁴ Australian Estates argued that without payment on the basis of sugar content there was no incentive for the grower to cut their cane discriminately or to see that it was properly topped and clean. In their letter to the Manager at Kalamia, the Melbourne Office stated the only explanation that suggested itself to them for Drysdale's action was that:

with such a big crushing, he may see the liquidation of a very considerable amount of the advances he has made to his suppliers in the past, which we understand aggregate well over £100,000. Mr. Drysdale may think that a loss on his milling operations might be compensated by the recovery of the vast amount owing to him.¹⁴⁵

Kalamia's Local Board met on 18 April, but no award was approved. The details surrounding the failure of Kalamia's Local Board to agree on an award could not be discovered in any of the surviving documents or newspaper reports. However, it is reasonable to assume that the decision not to approve an award was due to a disagreement between the miller and growers over the price for cane or method of payment. As a result of this failure, the Central Board scheduled an inquiry into the matter in late June. Before the Central Board met, however, the Kalamia suppliers, anxious that the mill should start because the large crops swelled by the standover from 1916, suggested to Australian Estates that the farmers should receive fortnightly payments of 35s. per ton, and that the price be adjusted according to the decision of the Central Board. Australian Estates described the offer as "ridiculous" and decided to await the judgement of the Central Board.¹⁴⁶

Australian Estates feared that John Drysdale's acceptance of awards for Pioneer and Inkerman Mills would prejudice their case before the Central Board.¹⁴⁷ However, instead of the farmers requesting payment on

¹⁴⁴ The Manager, A.E.M. Co., Melbourne, to Alexander Cruickshank, Manager, Kalamia Mill, Ayr, 18 April 1917. (Loose letter, Kalamia Mill, Ayr).

¹⁴⁵ The Manager, A.E.M. Co., Melbourne to Alexander Cruickshank, Manager, Kalamia Mill, Ayr, 18 April 1917. (Loose letter, Kalamia Mill, Ayr).

¹⁴⁶ The Manager, A.E.M. Co., Melbourne, to Alexander Cruickshank, Manager, Kalamia Mill, Ayr, 6 June 1917 (Loose letters, Kalamia Mill, Ayr); N.Q.R., 11 June 1917, p. 19.

¹⁴⁷ Sec., A.E.M. Co., Melbourne, to Alexander Cruickshank, Manager, Kalamia Mill, 2 May 1917 (Loose letter, Kalamia Mill, Ayr).

a flat rate they asked to be paid according to the percentage c.c.s. in their cane.¹⁴⁸ The Central Board agreed to this request and in late June the Kalamia Mill Award was approved.¹⁴⁹ Under the new award, farmers were to be paid 43s. for fifteen per cent c.c.s. as compared to 31s. in 1916. Upon hearing of the Award, the Melbourne Office of Australian Estates sent a telegram to their Manager at Kalamia stating that it could not possibly commence crushing under the award rates as it would involve a serious loss, making a net loss for three successive years. The telegram stated Australian Estates' remotest desire was not to be obstructive or unreasonable, but the firm could not possibly see its way to continue with certainty of further loss. Therefore, Australian Estates instructed its Manager at Kalamia Mill to ask growers to submit any reasonable proposition for the treatment of their cane or to repeat the previous offer of 38s.4d. for fifteen per cent c.c.s. with a variation of 3s.9d. per unit c.c.s.¹⁵⁰ Despite instructing their Manager at Kalamia not to appear unreasonable in this matter, the Melbourne Office in a separate letter to him blamed all the trouble on the "avarice" of the workers and growers.¹⁵¹

The suppliers of Kalamia objected to the position adopted by Australian Estates. They approached Senator Ferricks (Labor 1913-1920), who sent a telegram to Prime Minister Hughes conveying their protests against such an action and their fears that if Australian Estates was allowed to coerce the growers into accepting a reduced price other mills may follow.¹⁵² Despite the farmers' anger, they met the Manager of Kalamia Mill in early July to consider Australian Estates' offer, but it was mid-July before the growers had agreed to the miller's terms.¹⁵³ Later in the month, the Central Cane Prices Board after expressing reluctance to interfere with the gazetted award, approved an amended award for Kalamia Mill. The new award was similar to the one it

¹⁴⁸ N.Q.R., 25 June 1917, p. 9.

¹⁴⁹ Q.G.G., 109 (1917): 91-92.

¹⁵⁰ A copy of part of a telegram from The Manager, A.E.M. Co., Melbourne, to Alexander Cruickshank, Manager, Kalamia Mill, Ayr, n.dat, in a letter from The Manager, A.E.M. Co., to Prime Minister W.M. Hughes, 6 July 1917. (Loose letter, Kalamia Mill, Ayr).

¹⁵¹ The Manager, A.E.M. Co., Melbourne to Alexander Cruickshank, Manager, Kalamia Mill, Ayr, 2 July 1917. (Loose letter, Kalamia Mill, Ayr).

¹⁵² N.Q.R., 16 July 1917, p. 13.

¹⁵³ N.Q.R., 16 July 1917, p. 71; N.Q.R., 23 July 1917, p. 49.

replaced, except farmers were now to receive 38s.4d. for fifteen per cent c.c.s. instead of 40s. 3d. and that after the conclusion of the season, if there was any balance of gross proceeds of the season's crop after payment for cane and cost of manufacture and allowing for interest at ten per cent and depreciation of five per cent on the millowners' capital involved, accepted for the purpose hereof at £155,000, such balance up to 1s.4d. per ton was to be distributed among all the suppliers in proportion to the price already received by them.¹⁵⁴

The problems faced by farmers in getting Kalamia Mill to commence in 1917 were further compounded by shipping and railway strikes.¹⁵⁵ Prevented from emptying their sugar sheds, all of which proved to be inadequate when it came to holding large quantities of raw sugar, and denied supplies of lime and bags, the three Lower Burdekin mills had ceased crushing by the end of July. A seven week delay ensued, during which it was estimated that together the farmers (who could not harvest) and the millers lost £30,000 a week. At one stage in the strike, a group of Lower Burdekin farmers travelled to Townsville to unload a consignment of Inkerman sugar from trucks into a storage shed, because of the unwillingness of the waterside workers to take it out of the trucks. As a result of this seven week delay in the crushing on the Lower Burdekin, 200,000 tons of cane were stood over for the following season.¹⁵⁶

The failure to harvest the full crop on the Lower Burdekin in 1917 meant by the end of the year, Pioneer Sugar Mill's suppliers owed the company just over £91,000.¹⁵⁷ The farmers, however, were not the only ones to be struggling financially. Australian Estates as a result of the trouble with its Local Cane Prices Board and losses over the previous two years decided to sell their Lower Burdekin mill and associated lands to the farmers. The Company had previously rejected an offer from the

¹⁵⁴ Q.G.G., 109 (1917): 465-466.

¹⁵⁵ Details on the 1917 shipping and rail strikes can be found in Murphy, T.J. Ryan, pp. 264-271.

¹⁵⁶ N.Q.R., 27 August 1917, p. 56; N.Q.R., 24 September, 1917, pp. 6, 27; A.S.J., 10 January 1918, p. 674.

¹⁵⁷ See the "List of Advances to Farmers", in J.C.U., PMR/IAL/6, pp. 52-53.

growers in 1915 to purchase the mill,¹⁵⁸ but the Melbourne Office of Australian Estates in early 1918 instructed its Manager at Kalamia, that should the farmers be willing to purchase the factory, the firm would sell as it could see little or no hope of carrying on successfully under the existing legislation.¹⁵⁹ Similarly, John Drysdale was also contemplating disposing of Pioneer Sugar Mills Ltd.'s factories, for he was in correspondence with the Treasury Department about the possible sale of Pioneer and Inkerman to the Queensland Government.¹⁶⁰ However, none of the Lower Burdekin mills changed owners at this time.

Despite John Drysdale's threat not to operate Inkerman and Pioneer Mills in 1918, all the Lower Burdekin mills had commenced crushing by July, but once again only after the Central Cane Prices Board had resolved the disputes between miller and growers over the price to be paid for the latter's cane.¹⁶¹ Moreover, once the mills had commenced, the crushing was free of any incidents, except for a two week mill workers' strike at Inkerman, over a demand for increased wages.¹⁶² This loss of crushing time greatly reduced the ability of Inkerman Mill to handle the season's large crops, swelled by the previous year's standover. In an effort not to cause further farmer hardship by having standover for a third year, Pioneer Sugar Mills Ltd. directed 31,000 tons of cane via the North Coast Railway to Proserpine Central Mill for crushing.

Problems associated with the early operations of the Local Cane Prices Boards on the Lower Burdekin finally culminated in 1919, when Australian Estates refused to operate their mill. As was the usual pattern by this time, the Local Boards were appointed to decide the price to be paid for the growers' cane. The Awards for Pioneer and Inkerman were fixed in late April, without any appeal from Pioneer Sugar Mills Ltd. However, the Local Board for Kalamia was not scheduled to meet

¹⁵⁸ Sec., A.E.M. Co., London to The Manager, A.E.M. Co., Melbourne, 24 February 1915, A.N.U., Archives of Business and Labour, A.E.R. 165/142, Mail Letterbook No. 7, p. 419.

¹⁵⁹ The Manager, A.E.M. Co., Melbourne, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, 29 January 1918, M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book No. 21, p. 106.

¹⁶⁰ John Drysdale to the Under Secretary, Treasury Department, 10 May 1918, J.C.U., PMR/[C.T/1] Box 8, Article 37.

¹⁶¹ N.Q.R., 29 April 1918, p. 57; N.Q.R., 6 May 1918, p. 3; Q.G.G., 110 (1918): 1689-1691.

¹⁶² N.Q.R., 12 August 1918, p. 18.



Plate 19 Kalamia Mill, c. 1919.

Considerable improvements were made to the factory in the 1910s to enable it to crush the larger crops that were being cultivated for the mill. Kalamia's capacity, however, was still less than that of Pioneer Mill.

Photo: Courtesy of John Oxley Library.

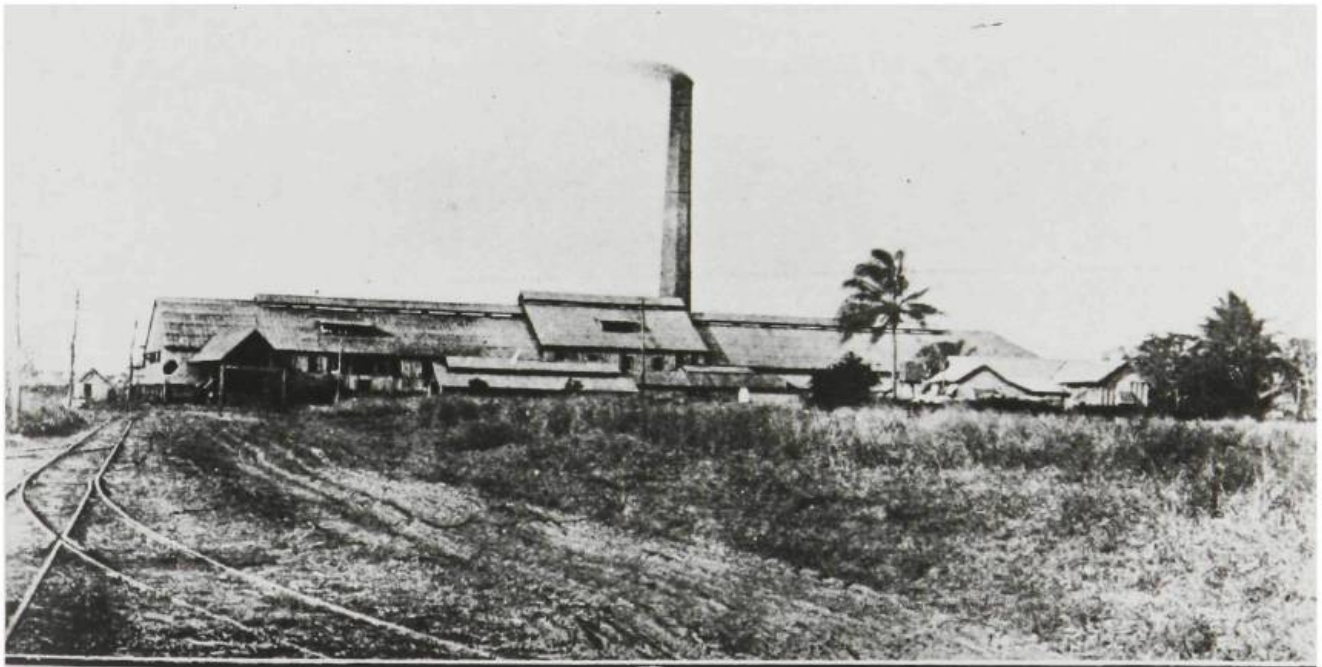


Plate 20 Pioneer Mill, 1919.

Despite the building of Inkerman, Pioneer remained the premier mill in the Lower Burdekin in the 1910s. Its capacity, however, was taxed by increasingly larger annual crops.

Photo: N.S.J., 7 November 1919, p. 487.

until early June, due to the illness of one of its members.¹⁶³ When the Local Board did meet it fixed the price to be received for a ton of cane supplied to Kalamia at 37s. for fourteen per cent c.c.s., or the same as 1918. Australian Estates appealed against the price fixed by the Local Board, on the grounds that the unfavourable season would result in Kalamia Mill being supplied with only approximately one-third of what was harvested in 1918, yet the price to be paid in 1919 was the same as that received in the previous year. The Central Board, after hearing this argument, decided that the farmers should receive a reduced price for their cane.¹⁶⁴ Australian Estates, however, claimed that even if they paid the amended price of 25s.6d. for a ton of cane, the mill would still run at a loss. Consequently, Australian Estates decided not to commence crushing.¹⁶⁵

Kalamia's failure to accept cane for crushing forced the suppliers of the mill to appeal to the Queensland Government to take control of the mill and run it for the season. Under the Sugar Cane Prices Amendment Act of 1917, the Crown could commandeer mills that refused to pay the award price. Australian Estates was agreeable to this course of action,¹⁶⁶ but the Minister for Agriculture suggested that the growers approach John Drysdale to see if his mills could crush the cane grown for Kalamia.¹⁶⁷ John Drysdale agreed to the Kalamia growers' request and in late September their lands were re-assigned to Pioneer.¹⁶⁸ Consequently, over the next few months most of the crop grown for Kalamia Mill was crushed at Pioneer Mill, although 5,789 tons were diverted to Inkerman Mill for processing. Under normal conditions this diversion of Kalamia's cane to Pioneer and Inkerman for crushing may have been impossible, but the Lower Burdekin was subject to another drought in 1919. The amount of cane crushed at both Pioneer and Inkerman Mills was well below that of 1918 (see Table 8.3).

¹⁶³ N.Q.R., 5 May 1919, p. 32.

¹⁶⁴ N.Q.R., 15 September 1919, p. 22.

¹⁶⁵ The Manager, A.E.M. Co., Melbourne, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, 24 September 1919, M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book No. 22, p. 76.

¹⁶⁶ N.Q.R., 15 September 1919, p. 73.

¹⁶⁷ N.Q.R., 29 September 1919, p. 73.

¹⁶⁸ Q.G.G., 113 (1919): 1031.

There were three main consequences of Australian Estates' refusal to begin crushing in late August. First, some farmers experienced increased hardships, for their crops, already affected by the low rainfall in 1919, deteriorated even further due to the delay in the start of crushing. Indeed, one farmer claimed that he lost half of his crop due to Kalamia's refusal to begin operating on the date specified in the Award.¹⁶⁹ Second, Australian Estates were involved in two court actions over their refusal to operate Kalamia in 1919. In the first case, four growers claimed that Australian Estates had broken sections of the Regulation of Sugar Cane Prices Act of 1915 in not taking delivery of cane offered by growers. However, the case was dismissed.¹⁷⁰ In the second case, Australian Estates sought £20,000 compensation from the Department of Agriculture with respect to the non-use by the Queensland Government of Kalamia Mill and the use of the mill's tramway and rolling stock to convey cane to Pioneer and Inkerman Mills. After lengthy legal proceedings the matter was settled when the Department of Agriculture agreed to pay £4,500 for the use of Kalamia's rolling stock.¹⁷¹ Third, there was another attempt by the growers to purchase Kalamia, but Australian Estates once again rejected the offer.¹⁷²

Australian Estates, although refusing to operate Kalamia Mill in 1919, had not notified the Central Cane Prices Board in May 1920 that it was contemplating similar action in 1920. Consequently, the Central Cane Prices Board approved an Award for Kalamia Mill and ordered that Australian Estates should have the mill, tramlines and rolling stock ready to commence crushing by the 30th of June. Awards were also approved for Pioneer and Inkerman Mills.¹⁷³ However, as usual there were appeals against the awards by both millers and growers and the Central Cane Prices Board was called upon to settle the disagreements. In all instances the price to be paid to the farmers was the main objection.

¹⁶⁹ Charles Hansen to the Under Secretary for Agriculture, 12 June 1920, Q.S.A., LAN/DF 4876, AF 1478, In-letter 21936 of 1920.

¹⁷⁰ For a summary of proceedings surrounding this case see N.Q.R., 21 June 1920, p. 20 and A.S.J., 9 July 1920, pp. 227-228.

¹⁷¹ For a summary of proceedings surrounding this case see N.Q.R., 1 August 1921, p. 33; N.Q.R., 19 December 1921, p. 16; and Connolly, John Drysdale and the Burdekin, pp. 159-160.

¹⁷² The Manager, A.E.M. Co., Melbourne, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, 18 December 1919, M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book No. 22, p. 137.

¹⁷³ Q.G.G., 114 (1920): 1853; N.Q.R., 28 June 1920, p. 1919.

After holding an inquiry into the awards in late June 1920, the Central Board reduced the price to be paid for a ton of cane that had a value of fifteen per cent c.c.s. and was received at Pioneer or Inkerman Mills from 58s.3d. to 56s.3d. In the case of Kalamia, a grower was to receive 56s.3d. for a ton of cane at fifteen per cent c.c.s., instead of 60s.5d.¹⁷⁴ Therefore, for the first time since the Local Boards were introduced, farmers on the Lower Burdekin received the same price at each mill for a ton of cane with fifteen per cent c.c.s.

After the Central Cane Prices Board had decided upon the prices to be paid for sugar cane in 1920, the crushing commenced and proceeded without any major disruptions, except for a week's temporary closure at Inkerman Mill to allow for an accumulation of raw sugar in the factory's storage areas to be cleared.¹⁷⁵ This lack of storage for raw sugar at the Lower Burdekin mills that had become apparent during the late 1910s was re-emphasized when one or more of the district's mills had to close during the waterside workers' strikes in 1923 and 1925.¹⁷⁶ Eventually, additional storage was built at the mills.¹⁷⁷

What were the consequences of the droughts, industrial disputes and problems associated with the introduction of the Regulation of Sugar Cane Prices Act of 1915 on the Lower Burdekin? Firstly, there was no substantial diminution in the acreage cultivated with sugar cane. Sugar remained the district's staple in the late 1910s (see Table 8.8). Farmers did not turn to growing alternative crops.

Secondly, there was not a rapid turnover in farm ownership in this period on the northern side of the Burdekin River, which may have been expected if sugar growers were trying to leave or being forced out of the industry due to the hardships being experienced. An examination of Table 8.9 reveals that there was a forty-seven per cent retention rate amongst Kalamia and Pioneer Mill suppliers between 1912 and 1920. This initially appears to be less than the percentage retention rate for between 1901 and 1912, yet if a four per cent loss of farmers attributed

¹⁷⁴ Q.G.G., 115 (1920): 120-123.

¹⁷⁵ A.S.J., 3 December 1920, p. 537.

¹⁷⁶ N.Q.R., 19 October 1923, p. 34; N.Q.R., 12 October 1925, p. 35; N.Q.R., 2 November 1925, p. 30.

¹⁷⁷ T. Easterby, "Annual Report of the B.S.E.S., 1926", Q.P.P., 2 (1927): 651; A.S.J., 4 April 1929, p. 22.

Table 8.8. Crop Acreages on the Lower Burdekin,
1913-1920

	Total Land Under Crop	Fallow	Maize	Sugar	Other
1913	27706	13713	145	13449	399
1914	24084	4985	143	18501	455
1915	26958	12018	70	12309	2561
1916	24164	7799	299	15628	438
1917	27864	6367	125	21114	258
1918	29860	8130	69	21417	244
1919	27793	9729	184	17215	663
1920	27061	7015	208	19477	361

Source: Assembled from figures provided in the Annual Reports of the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Stock, 1913-1920, in Q.P.P.

Table 8.9. Percentage Retention Rates Amongst Suppliers
of Kalamia and Pioneer Mills, 1901-1920

	Farmers Supplying Either Mill (a)		Same Farmers Supplying Either Mill (b)	% Retention
1901	50	1912	26	52
1912	81	1920	85	47

Note: % Retention Rate = $(b/a) \times 100$

to the forced exodus of seven non-European growers due to the Sugar Cultivation Act of 1913 is discounted, then the retention rate for the 1910s would have been almost the same as that which occurred in the 1900s.

It is harder to assess the stability of the population of sugar growers on the Inkerman side of the Burdekin River at this time, due to the inability to locate the 1914 list of suppliers to Inkerman Mill. However, a comparison of the 1916 and 1919 list of suppliers to Inkerman revealed that in the latter year, forty-six of the sixty-three farmers who sent cane to Inkerman in 1916 still supplied the mill. This produced a retention rate of seventy-three per cent. However, as the time span over which the comparison was made is so short, and as there is no previous period with which to compare the figure, it is difficult to conclude anything from the result. Despite the lack of substantial evidence, it is reasonable to assume that the population of sugar growers on the southern side of the Burdekin River was quite stable in this period, particularly considering that most of the Inkerman growers were new settlers who had just invested large amounts of capital trying to become established and as such would have had but little choice to hold onto their farms in the hope of eliminating their large debts.

Therefore, the main outcome of the problems during the late 1910s was indebtedness amongst the suppliers of Inkerman and Pioneer Mills. Indeed, John Drysdale by December 1920 had allowed the growers for Pioneer Sugar Mills Ltd. to accumulate debts of £107,370 with the firm.¹⁷⁸ No figures were available for the Kalamia Mill farmers' debts to Australian Estates, but it is reasonable to assume that many owed the Company some funds, although most likely considerably less than Pioneer Sugar Mills Ltd.'s growers, because of Australian Estates' stricter financial policy towards its growers. However, even with this debt, the Lower Burdekin farmers rallied behind the Haughton River growers in their efforts to finance the re-erection of Invicta Mill at Giru. This strongly indicates that many of the Lower Burdekin cane farmers willingly took a reduction in their yearly income in order to obtain control of a mill they owned. However, the struggle to obtain a new mill on the Lower Burdekin was not the only new project in the district conceived as a result of hardships in the 1910s. At Inkerman, the new settlers,

¹⁷⁸ See the "List of Advances to Farmers", in J.C.U., PMR/IAL/6, pp. 52-53. See also Ev. A.E. Dean in A.B. Piddington et al., "Evidence of the Royal Commission on the Sugar Industry, 1920", p. 364.

devastated by the drought of 1915, had convinced the government to construct the Inkerman Irrigation Scheme. The efforts to see this programme completed will now be examined.

8.7 THE FIGHT AGAINST DROUGHT: THE INKERMEN IRRIGATION SCHEME

In January 1913 eighty-five Inkerman settlers sent a petition to their local parliamentarian, Edwin Caine (Liberal 1912-1915), requesting that the Queensland Government construct an irrigation scheme on the southern side of the Burdekin River to assist the new settlers.¹⁷⁹ After receiving the petition, Caine forwarded it to the Treasury Department, which handled irrigation matters in Queensland at this time. Three months later a government engineer inspected the Inkerman lands and recommended the Queensland Hydraulic Engineer that a scheme consisting of a centrally situated electrical plant supplying power for the working of pumps on each holding could be suitable for the district, as many of the privately owned irrigation plants on the Lower Burdekin were not economically located or managed.¹⁸⁰

Even though the visiting government engineer believed that the privately owned irrigation plants on the Lower Burdekin were uneconomical, it appears growers who could afford such facilities continued to install them in the mid-1910s. Reference to Table 8.10 shows that there was a steady yearly increase in the number of irrigators in the early 1910s, peaking at 204 in 1916. Rainfall of less than 1,000 mm in the years 1912-1916, excepting 1913 (see Table 3.4), undoubtedly convinced the region's small farmers of the need to irrigate. The substantial drop in the number of irrigators and the area irrigated on the Lower Burdekin in 1917, however, was a result of heavy yearly rainfall in 1917 (1,715 mm). Rainfall of less than 1,200 in 1918 and 1919 (see Table 3.4) meant an increase again in irrigation, although the level reached was not as high as in the early 1910s.

Some of the new irrigators in the mid-1910s were situated at

¹⁷⁹ Petition for the Construction of Irrigation Works and Constitution of a Water Supply Area, 16 January 1913, attached to a letter from Harold Christian, Sec., I.F.G.A., to Edwin Caine, M.L.A., 16 January 1913, Q.S.A., TRE/A446, In-letter 00434, filed with In-letter 2449 of 1918.

¹⁸⁰ H. Eklund, Ayr, to The Hydraulic Engineer, Brisbane, 11 April 1913, Q.S.A., TRE/A446, In-letter 34160 filed with In-letter 2449 of 1918.

Table 8.10. Irrigation Statistics for the Lower Burdekin,
1913-1920

	Acres Irrigated on the Lower Burdekin	Acres Irrigated in Queensland	Number of Irrigators on the Lower Burdekin
1913	7417 (62) ¹	11904	145
1914	7655 (65)	11809	162
1915	7898 (67)	11842	186
1916	7175 (61)	10886	204
1917	1298 (29)	4467	45
1918	4078 (59)	6947	133
1919	6004 (65)	9267	177
1920	6297 (64)	9803	183

¹ The figure in brackets refers to the area under irrigation on the Lower Burdekin as a percentage of the acreage irrigated in Queensland.

Source: Compiled from figures published in the Annual Reports of the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Stock, 1913-1920, in Q.P.P.

Inkerman, but many of the new settlers on the southern side of the Burdekin River were unable to purchase their own irrigation facilities. Thus, they had to wait for the Queensland Government to act. And wait they did! Over eighteen months passed before the Inkerman Farmers' and Graziers' Association (I.F.G.A.), obviously tired of governmental inaction, wrote to the Hydraulic Engineer stating they were in complete ignorance of what was to be the outcome of their request.¹⁸¹ In reply to their inquiry, the I.F.G.A. were informed that the Queensland Government could not entertain the scheme,¹⁸² despite the Hydraulic Engineer and the engineer who inspected the district recommending that it should be undertaken.¹⁸³

The fears expressed by the Inkerman growers with regard to a drought were realized in 1915 when the Lower Burdekin received considerably less than average rainfall. Halfway through the disastrous year the Inkerman settlers again approached the Queensland Government through their new local member, Charles Collins (Labor 1915-1936), asking for the irrigation scheme to be constructed.¹⁸⁴ However, other than carrying out a few trial bores in August and September, to determine the extent of the underground water supply, the Queensland Government failed to undertake any further action with regard to the project.¹⁸⁵ At this stage, according to Connolly, John Drysdale offered to provide the finance for the Inkerman growers to purchase their own plants.¹⁸⁶ Some accepted the offer, but it appears most were willing to wait for the Queensland Government to construct a centrally planned irrigation

¹⁸¹ L. Osborne, Sec., I.F.G.A., to the Hydraulic Engineer, Brisbane, 27 July 1914, Q.S.A., TRE/A446, In-letter 30765 filed with In-letter 2449 of 1918.

¹⁸² Under Secretary, Treasury Department, Brisbane, to L. Osborne, Sec., I.F.G.A., 20 August 1914, Q.S.A., TRE/A446, Out-letter 04055 filed with In-letter 2449 of 1918.

¹⁸³ John Hargreaves, Acting Hydraulic Engineer, to the Under Secretary, Treasury Department, Brisbane, 11 March 1914, Q.S.A., TRE/A446, Memorandum 02192 filed with In-letter 2449 of 1918; H. Eklund, Report and Estimate of the Inkerman Irrigation Scheme, 8 December 1914, Q.S.A., TRE/A446, In-letter 01322 filed with In-letter 2449 of 1918.

¹⁸⁴ L. Osborne, Sec., I.F.G.A., to Charles Collins M.L.A., 7 June 1915, Q.S.A., TRE/A446, In-letter 03050 filed with In-letter 2449 of 1918.

¹⁸⁵ N.Q.R., 15 August 1915, p. 16; Under Secretary, Treasury Department, Brisbane, to Charles Collins M.L.A., 29 November 1915, Q.S.A., TRE/A446, In-letter 6378 filed with In-letter 2449 of 1918.

¹⁸⁶ Connolly, John Drysdale and the Burdekin, p. 165.

scheme.

Throughout the early months of 1916 the Inkerman farmers submitted more appeals (some through Charles Collins) to the Queensland Government, asking that the project should be further considered.¹⁸⁷ Eventually, in July 1916 the government agreed to the scheme. A month later Queensland's Hydraulic Engineer, John Hargreaves, visited the Lower Burdekin where he addressed a crowd of 120 farmers on the proposed project. After hearing the details on the government's intentions, the growers agreed unanimously with "great cheering" to the plan to provide them with irrigation facilities.¹⁸⁸ The scheme was officially gazetted in September 1916 and the Inkerman Water Supply Area formed (see Figure 8.5).

The newly established Water Supply Area embraced most of the lands that had been opened as part of the Inkerman Estate between 1911 and 1914. However, not all the Inkerman farmers were to be part of the irrigation scheme. As mentioned earlier, some had tired of waiting for the Queensland Government to provide them with the means to irrigate their crops and installed their own irrigation plants,¹⁸⁹ while others withdrew from the project claiming it was inadvisable to undertake any further liability due to the uncertainties with regard to labour in the sugar industry, caused by the Dickson Award.¹⁹⁰

Central to the Inkerman Irrigation Scheme was the building of a coal fired powerhouse which was to supply electricity to power pumps, which were to raise water from wells, instead of the traditional spears that had become such a feature of the Lower Burdekin. The preliminary estimate of the cost of building a power house, establishing an electrical

¹⁸⁷ H. Christian, Sec., I.F.G.A. to Charles Collins M.L.A., 20 February 1916, Q.S.A., TRE/A446, In-letter 03151 filed with In-letter 2449 of 1918; H. Christian, Sec., I.F.G.A., to the Under Secretary, Treasury Department, Brisbane, 3 April 1916, Q.S.A., TRE/A446, In-letter 0388 filed with In-letter 2449 of 1918; N.Q.R., 29 May 1916, p. 22.

¹⁸⁸ N.Q.R., 14 August 1916, p. 22.

¹⁸⁹ N.Q.R., 26 June 1916, p. 8; John Hargreaves to the Under Secretary, Treasury Department, Brisbane, 20 October 1916, Q.S.A., TRE/A446, In-letter 8427 filed with In-letter 2449 of 1918.

¹⁹⁰ H.P. Eklund to John Hargreaves, Brisbane, 11 December 1916, Q.S.A., TRE/A446, In-letter 6328 filed with In-letter 2449 of 1918.

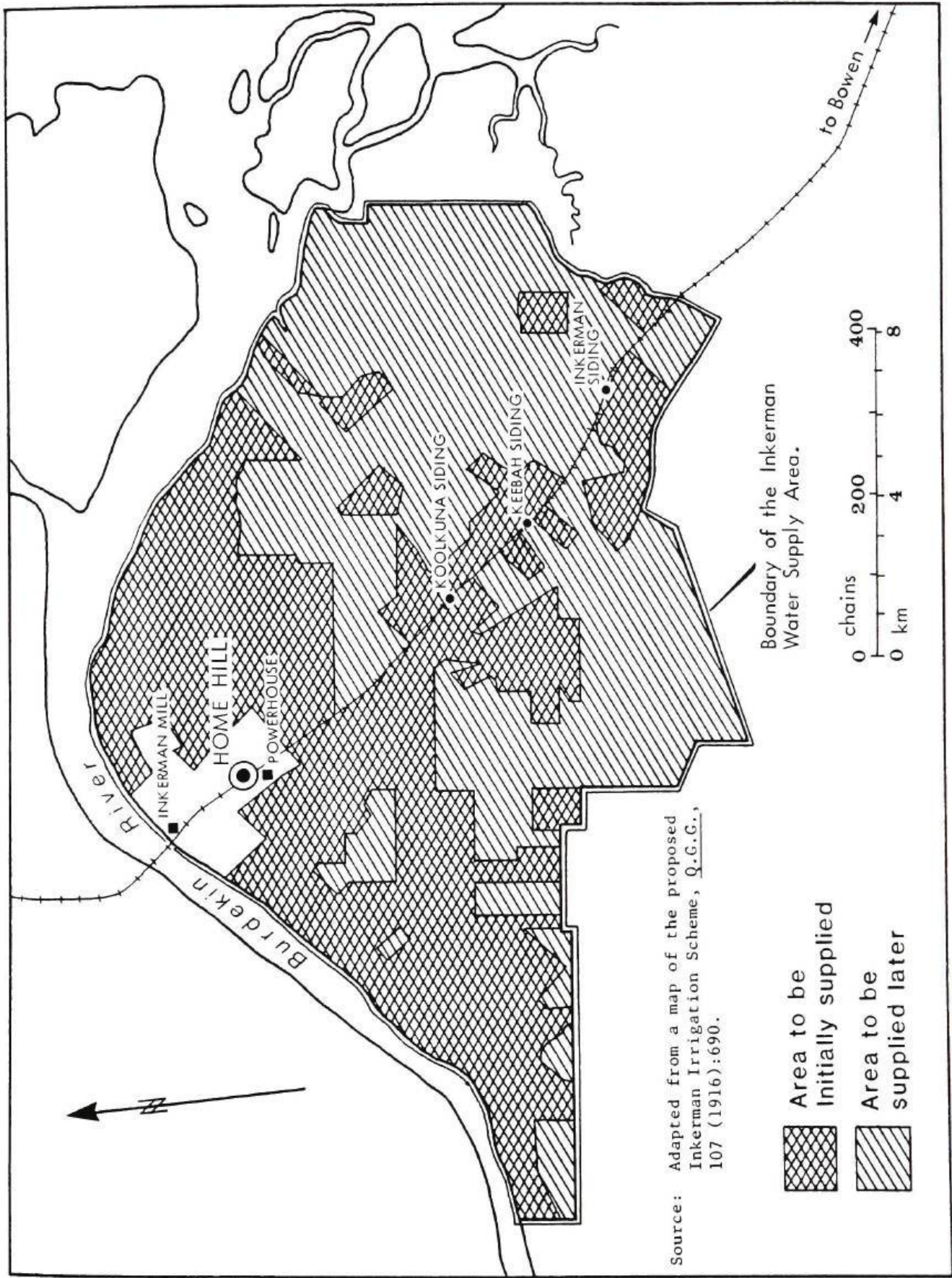


Figure 8.5 The Area Proposed to be Covered by the Inkerman Irrigation Scheme.

power grid and sinking the irrigation wells was £131,000.¹⁹¹ Treasury believed it would take at least two years to have the scheme completed and working (see Plate 21).¹⁹²

Despite the Treasury's optimism that it could complete most of the scheme in at least two years, the project was beset with problems that delayed its completion. There were shortages of material, delays in the arrival of material, problems with labour and the construction engineers found the initial layout of the scheme unsuitable.¹⁹³ Indeed, the scheme was so far behind in its schedule that the building of the powerhouse did not commence until 1919,¹⁹⁴ the year when the project was supposedly to be finished. Eventually, the scheme was officially opened by E.G. Theodore, Premier of Queensland, in May 1922¹⁹⁵ although it was not fully operational until late 1924, much to the annoyance of the farmers.¹⁹⁶ Moreover, even after the scheme's completion it remained a controversial project. There were complaints about water charges, poor construction of the wells, inadequate supplies of water to the farms and the cost of its construction and operation.¹⁹⁷ Indeed, by June 1930 the accumulated debts of the Inkerman Irrigation Scheme amounted to £228,939¹⁹⁸ John Drysdale's belief that individual pumping units, economically run and carrying the minimum burden of interest would it appears have provided the Inkerman farmers with irrigation in half the time and at considerably less cost.

Long before the completion of the Inkerman Irrigation Scheme, doubts had been raised about its usefulness, for it was realized that

¹⁹¹ Q.G.G., 107 (1916): 689.

¹⁹² Under Secretary, Treasury Department, Brisbane, to Senator Ferricks, Ayr, 17 July 1916, Q.S.A., TRE/A446, Telegram 04212 filed with In-letter 2449 of 1918.

¹⁹³ N.Q.R., 28 July 1919, p. 22; N.Q.R., 28 July 1920, p. 10; N.Q.R., 8 August 1920, p. 16; N.Q.R., 6 March 1922, p. 37.

¹⁹⁴ N.Q.R., 23 September 1919, p. 25.

¹⁹⁵ N.Q.R., 23 September 1919, p. 25.

¹⁹⁶ N.Q.R., 12 February 1923, p. 11; H.H.O., 22 February 1923; N.Q.R., 28 January 1924, p. 10; N.Q.R., 21 July 1924, p. 9.

¹⁹⁷ For the best summary of the workings of the Inkerman Irrigation Scheme in the 1920s refer to Connolly, John Drysdale and the Burdekin, pp. 169-70. See also Annual Reports of the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission, 1923-1930 in Q.P.P.

¹⁹⁸ N.Q.R., 15 November 1930, p. 77.

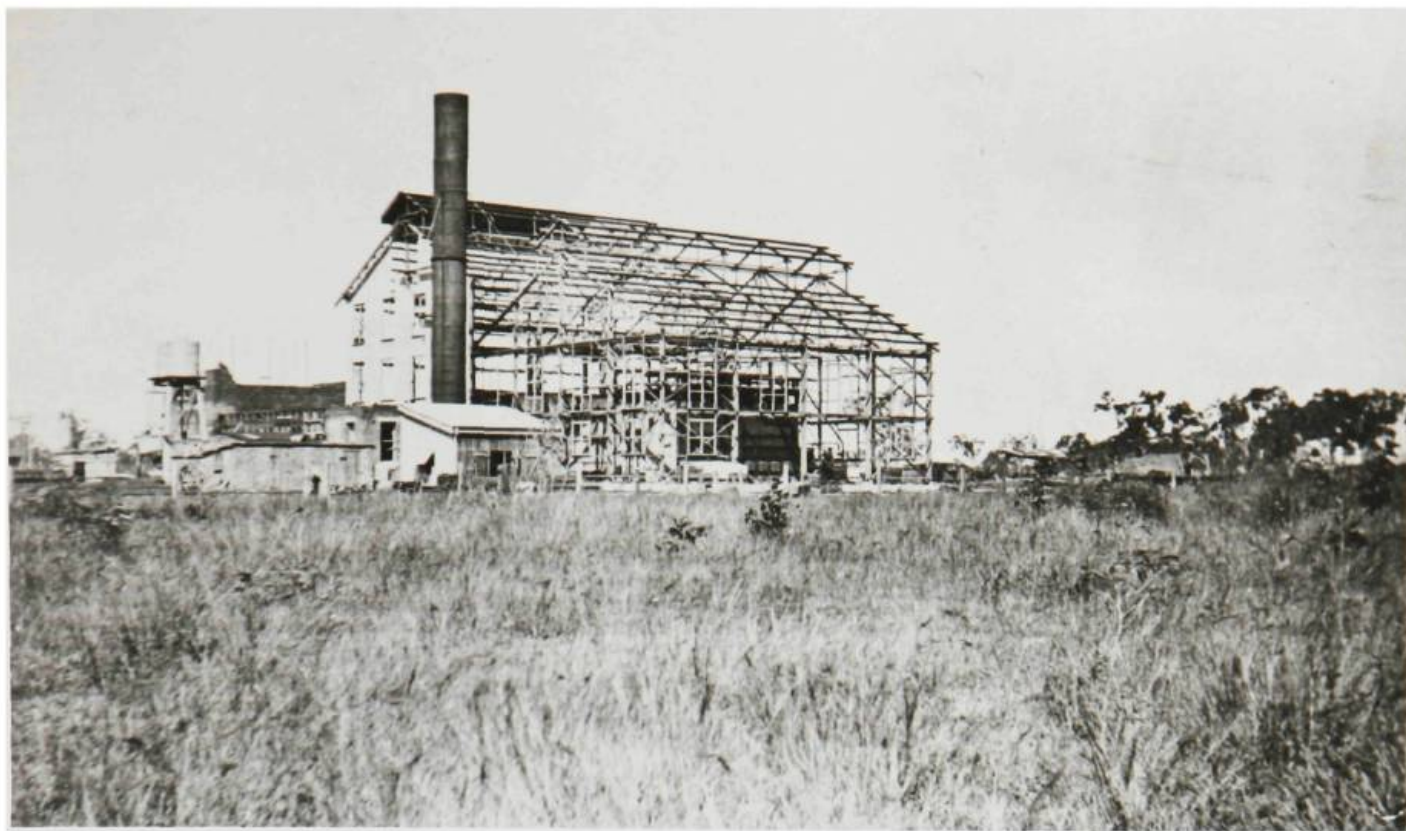


Plate 21 Building the powerhouse for the Inkerman
Irrigation Scheme, 1921.

Photo: Courtesy of Mr L. Cooper, Home Hill.



Plate 22 Sinking irrigation cylinders for the wells
of the Inkerman Irrigation Scheme. Date unknown.

Photo: Courtesy of Mr A. Berryman, Home Hill.

Inkerman Mill would not be able to handle all the sugar-cane that could possibly be grown on the southern side of the Burdekin River, when the project was fully operational.¹⁹⁹ In an effort to alleviate this situation an experimental farm was established on the outskirts of Home Hill in 1919 with the aim of carrying out not only trials on determining which varieties of cane were suitable for the district, but also to see which other crops could be successfully grown in the area.²⁰⁰ However, as will be shown in the next chapter, the Inkerman farmers were more inclined to grow sugar cane than experiment with new crops.

The delay in the completion of the Inkerman Irrigation Scheme contributed to the financial hardship experienced by the settlers at Inkerman in the late 1910s. Low rainfall in 1919 meant the crops harvested and crushed at Inkerman Mill in 1919 and 1920 were substantially reduced (see Table 8.2). However, even though few farmers were irrigating on the southern side of the Burdekin River in those years, the Lower Burdekin remained the region where around sixty per cent of the total acreage irrigated in Queensland was located (see Table 8.10). This percentage, as will be seen in the next chapter, increased further as the Inkerman Irrigation Scheme became operational in the early 1920s.

8.8 CONCLUSIONS

In the last chapter reference was made to the opening up of the Inkerman Estate lands to closer settlement. As part of the negotiations surrounding the Inkerman Estate subdivisions, John Drysdale agreed to construct a sugar mill on the southern side of the Burdekin River. This new mill, named Inkerman, crushed from 1914 onwards. It was primarily supplied by the newly settled Inkerman selectors, although varying amounts of cane grown at localities on the northern side of the Burdekin River (i.e. Macdesme, Jarvisfield, Rita Island, Haughton River) were also sent to Inkerman Mill for crushing. The ability of Pioneer Sugar Mills Ltd. to transport cane across the Burdekin River to Inkerman created a situation where a small group of growers became partial suppliers to both Pioneer and Inkerman Mills.

¹⁹⁹ Ev. H. Eklund, in A.B. Piddington et al., "Evidence of the Royal Commission on the Sugar Industry, 1920", p. 375; Harry Easterby, B.S.E.S., to the Under Secretary, Department of Agriculture, Brisbane, 12 April 1919, Q.S.A., TRE/A495, In-letter 1552 filed with In-letter 3065 of 1919.

²⁰⁰ Extract from the Annual Report of the Land Commissioner, Townsville, 1920, Q.P.P., 2 (1921): 1012.

The operation of Inkerman Mill affected the relationship between Australian Estates and Pioneer Sugar Mills Ltd. It appears the latter believed John Drysdale was trying to encourage Kalamia growers in the Lower Jarvisfield locality to consider supplying Inkerman Mill. In addition, a number of Kalamia growers at Macdesme and Mirrigan switched to supplying Pioneer Mill. Consequently, after 1915 the close co-operation between the two firms ceased to exist.

The above change in the relationship between the Lower Burdekin millers was accompanied by a reduction in the influence over their employees and farmers. In previous chapters it was shown that the Queensland Government had made some attempts to reduce the power of the district's millers: for instance, legislation was introduced in 1901 to make it mandatory that weighbridges were placed in each mill to ensure correct records were kept of the amount of cane delivered by the farmers and under the Sugar Workers and Shearers Accommodation Act of 1905 and subsequent industrial legislation the wages and conditions of mill employees were improved. Nevertheless, before 1915 the millers were still able to employ non-Europeans and they enjoyed a virtual monopoly, for they dictated the cane prices received by their farmers. However, as a result of the introduction of the Sugar Cultivation Act of 1913, millers found it was not as easy to employ non-Europeans, while the Regulation of Sugar Cane Prices Act of 1915 removed their power to decide upon the price for cane, method of payment and other penalties and conditions.

The Lower Burdekin millers, especially John Drysdale, resisted the above attempts to reduce their influence. The numbers of non-Europeans working in the factories of Pioneer Sugar Mills Ltd. were reduced, although Japanese were employed as late as 1930. John Drysdale also continued to arrange cane supplies to both mills as he considered appropriate, for as mentioned above some growers at Macdesme, Jarvisfield, Rita Island and the Haughton River became partial suppliers to both mills, despite the provisions of the Regulation of Sugar Cane Prices Act of 1915 assigning a farmer to one mill. In addition, to stop farmers supporting the Local Cane Prices Board, John Drysdale proposed profit sharing arrangements with the suppliers of Pioneer Sugar Mills Ltd., and both milling companies threatened in 1917 and 1918 not to operate their mills; a threat Australian Estates eventually carried out in 1919. Requests to improve the mills' capacities so as to handle the additional cane being grown by the farmers were also refused.

Unlike previous occasions, however, the Lower Burdekin millers were unsuccessful in their attempts to control the district's farmers, for the Local Cane Prices Boards remained in existence, farmers were paid on the basis of c.c.s., not tonnage as argued by the millers and a fourth mill, controlled by farmers, was erected in the Haughton River district. In addition, the Inkerman growers even managed to convince the Queensland Government to build the Inkerman Irrigation Scheme - John Drysdale was no longer considered as a source of finance for irrigation. The farmers, who had been lesser decision-makers before 1910, were it is reasonable to argue in the ascendancy in the late 1910s.

How did the system of proprietary central mills supplied by small farms fare on the Lower Burdekin in the late 1910s given the changed relationship between miller and farmer? Certainly the millers did not do as well as previously. They found it difficult to make profits under wartime conditions, below world parity prices paid by the Commonwealth and the awards gazetted by the Local Cane Prices Board. In fact, they contemplated selling their factories to the farmers. The growers, on the other hand, fared no better. Industrial disputes, droughts and conflict with the millers meant the district's farmers, especially those on the Inkerman side of the Burdekin River, struggled. Despite these difficulties, there was no evidence to suggest that the district's farmers were abandoning cane cultivation for other crops. Indeed, the Lower Burdekin farmers had little option but to cultivate cane, for the butter factory had closed and no other crops in the district had proved as viable as sugar-cane. However, as a result of these difficulties many of the Lower Burdekin farmers had become heavily indebted to Pioneer Sugar Mills Ltd., although there was no suggestion that John Drysdale or Australian Estates were unwilling to carry their struggling farmers, for no evidence could be found to indicate that either Company was taking over the farms and replacing the family farmer with hired managers (i.e. corporate farming).²⁰¹.

Finally, the problems experienced by the Lower Burdekin farmers and millers in the late 1910s were being repeated throughout other cane-growing regions in Queensland. The Commonwealth Government, recognizing that some of the difficulties were related to the low price it was paying for the State's sugar, increased the price of a ton of raw

²⁰¹ For a discussion on corporate farming see Geoffrey Lawrence: Capitalism and the Countryside. The Rural Crisis in Australia (Sydney: Pluto Press, 1987), pp. 134-135.

sugar from £21 to £30 in 1920. This action and its continued embargo on cheaply produced overseas sugar occurred because the Commonwealth Government believed that the sugar industry must be protected and viable, for it was the only endeavour that had populated northern Queensland. As such, sugar had linked the north of Queensland in a "growing interdependence with the rest of Australia".²⁰² This interdependence, as will be seen in the next chapter, resulted in continued protection for the industry, although by the late 1920s, regulatory measures had been introduced to avoid overproduction.

²⁰² Bolton, A Thousand Miles Away, p. 309.

CHAPTER 9

REASSIGNMENTS AND RESTRICTIONS:

IMPACT OF INVICTA MILL AND OVERPRODUCTION ON THE LOWER BURDEKIN SUGAR INDUSTRY, 1921-1930

9.1 Introduction

Two topics are the focus of this Chapter: overproduction and the performance of Invicta Mill. Both issues are related, for Invicta Mill, which began operations in 1921, suffered inadequate supplies of cane in the early 1920s. This was remedied in 1926 when the mill was assigned Ingham line cane growers, who were located up to one hundred kilometres from the mill. Such an arrangement occurred despite the growers for the other three Lower Burdekin mills producing large crops that outstripped the capacity of their respective mills and led to the reassignment of Inkerman and Pioneer suppliers to a greatly expanded Kalamia Mill.

As a background to the above developments, the discussion will commence with an assessment of the broader political and economic forces which were influencing the Queensland sugar industry in the 1920s. Like the 1900s, the Commonwealth continued its protection for the industry. However, it also returned some of the industry's marketing arrangements to the Queensland Government, which with industry assistance, began to introduce measures to avoid overproduction.

9.2 Post War Controls

Reference has already been made to Prime Minister Hughes' announcement in July 1920 that the Commonwealth would enter into a further sugar agreement for a period of three years, whereunder the price of a ton of 94 n.t. sugar was raised from £21 to £30.6s.8d. per ton. This large increase in the price for a ton of raw sugar was introduced partially to compensate growers for the rise in labour costs that had occurred since 1917, but more importantly according to Prime Minister Hughes to enable the industry, and particularly the raw milling side of it, to rehabilitate itself, to increase efficiency in all phases and also to encourage the production of Australian sugar up to the full requirements of the local market.¹ Hughes' policy met with success. A combination of

¹ Messrs. Townsend et al., "Majority Report of the Sugar Industry Committee, 1930", C.P.P., 3 (1929-1931): 42.

a guaranteed price for raw sugar and a return to favourable seasons stimulated production, especially in the northern cane-growing regions (see Table 9.1). Consequently, Australia's raw sugar output in 1921 and 1922 was higher than all previous years in the 1910s, with the exception of 1917. As a result, the Commonwealth imported substantially less foreign sugar than in the late 1910s (see Figure 9.1).

The larger harvests and higher price for raw sugar in 1921 and 1922 was according to Easterby the "salvation of many mills" in Queensland, for it enabled them to recover from their losses that were obtained in the late 1910s and to secure the necessary capital to increase their factories' capacities to deal with the expected future larger crops.² Indeed, the Queensland Government even held a Royal Commission in 1922 to inquire into the most suitable locations where future sugar mills could be erected. This Commission decided that the settlers in the Tully-Banyan area could at that time supply a mill if it was erected in the district and that two other sites - Bailey Creek and Daintree, just north of Port Douglas and Inkerman on the southern side of the Burdekin River - were nominated as possible future localities where new mills could be constructed.³ The Queensland Government decided to proceed with the erection of a mill at Tully. The mill accepted its first cane in 1924.⁴

Even though the Sugar Agreement of 1920 brought stability to the sugar industry, the support it received had aroused opposition from consumers, fruit growers and jam manufacturers in the southern States.⁵ Indeed, fruit growers in the southern states during 1921 and 1922 called for the abolition of the customs duty on imported sugar,⁶ while sugar

² Easterby, The Queensland Sugar Industry, p. 144.

³ William Harris et al., "Report of the Royal Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Most Suitable Locations for Sugar Mills which may be Erected in the Near Future", Q.P.P., 2 (1923): 211.

⁴ Wood, Sugar Country, p. 25.

⁵ Ulrich Ellis, A History of the Australian Country Party (Melbourne: Melbourne Uni. Press, 1963), p. 80.

⁶ A.S.J., 6 May 1921, pp. 77-78; Producers Review, 10 November 1921, p. 38.

Table 9.1. Distribution of Sugar-Cane Acreage in Queensland, 1921-1930

Region	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930
Cairns/Mossman	27241	30059	30421	34852	36990	39986	41226	40856	40717	42182
Herbert/Mourilyan	39259	41745	49077	58495	60084	60701	64977	72771	75153	71414
Lower Burdekin	23795	24978	24731	26786	34224	30765	29125	32602	35811	35335
Proserpine	5678	6656	6508	7897	9668	9708	10405	10937	10335	12152
Mackay	44919	49679	52403	59671	62874	64723	65456	65770	67832	69101
Bundaberg	23990	27985	34691	32395	32553	30309	33892	32680	35077	37495
Childers/Maryborough	15661	17237	18722	23885	23687	23063	23640	22442	22766	22626
Maroochy	3005	4466	6033	7683	7510	6045	5121	4473	4770	4468
Brisbane/Logan	965	1498	1384	1855	1710	1219	996	945	1199	1297
Queensland	184513	204303	223970	253519	269300	266519	274838	283476	293360	296070

Source: Assembled on the basis of figures in the Annual Reports of the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Stock, in Q.P.P., 1922-1931.

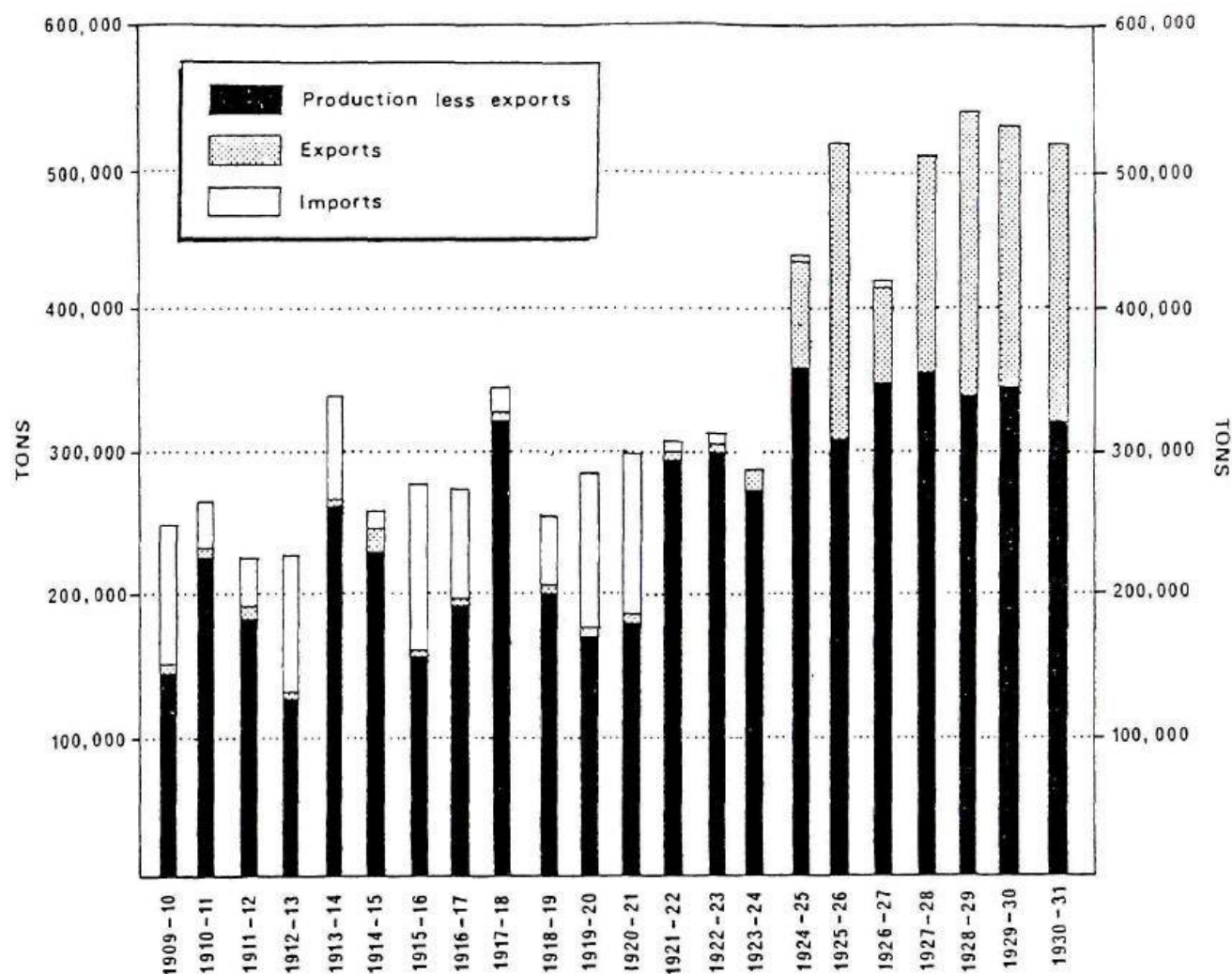


Figure 9.1 Australian Raw Sugar Production and Overseas Trade, 1910-1931.

SOURCE: J. Gunn et al., "Minority Report of the Sugar Industry Committee", C.P.P., 3(1929-1931):87 and H.W. Kerr, "Report of the B.S.E.S., 1932", Q.P.P., 2(1932): 569

Table 9.2. Local and Export Prices Received for Australian Raw Sugar, 1915-1930

Season	Tons Raw Sugar Produced 94 n.t.	Australian Consumption		Export		"Pool" Price
		Tons	Price	Tons	Price	
			£. s. d.			£. s. d.
1915	159,847	261,787	18 0 0	-	-	18 0 0
1916	193,511	265,648	18 0 0	-	-	18 0 0
1917	328,349	374,361	21 0 0	-	-	21 0 0
1918	202,609	278,514	21 0 0	-	-	21 0 0
1919	173,354	288,445	21 0 0	-	-	21 0 0
1920	182,981	290,183	30 6 8	-	-	30 6 8
1921	300,004	256,586	30 6 8	-	-	30 6 8
1922	306,365	274,030	30 6 8	-	-	30 6 8
1923	286,808	270,103	27 0 0	16,705	-	27 0 0
1924	432,585	356,413	26 0 0	76,172	-	26 0 0
1925	516,155	289,154	26 0 0	227,001	11 5 9	19 10 7
1926	415,690	338,057	26 15 0	77,633	14 18 10	24 10 10
1927	508,602	350,010	26 10 0	158,592	12 2 6	22 0 4
1928	536,968	345,168	26 13 6	191,800	10 10 0	20 17 11
1929	538,063	335,149	26 16 0	202,914	9 17 0	20 5 10
1930	516,783	313,178	27 0 0	203,605	8 5 0	19 13 1

Source: As in Figure 9.1.

growers, the A.S.P.A. and Queensland's newly formed Sugar Committee⁷ were pressuring the Commonwealth to increase the duty on imported foreign sugars and to extend the Sugar Agreement beyond 1923.⁸ Hughes' Nationalist Government resisted moves to renew the Agreement, favouring de-controlling the industries that the Commonwealth had regulated during World War I. Nevertheless, it decided to investigate the possibility of increasing the duty on imported sugar. The matter was referred to the Tariff Board.

The report of the Tariff Board's investigation into the duty on imported sugar was presented to the Federal Parliament in 1922. The Tariff Board noted that a duty of £6 per ton on imported sugar was already in existence, but this protection had not been in operation for some years because of the Commonwealth's control over the sugar industry. However, this duty would once again come into operation after the Sugar Agreement of 1920 expired at the of June 1923. The Tariff Board went on to state that the sugar industry was in an anomalous position, since the Queensland Government fixed the wages and conditions for workers in the industry and had a legislative framework that determined what price growers received for their cane, yet the Federal Government was called upon to protect a position it had no hand in creating. As such, the Board recommended a duty of £9.6s.8d. per ton on imported raw cane sugar (not the £14 requested by the A.S.P.A.) and £11.6s.8d. per ton on imported beet sugar.⁹

Hughes' Government accepted the recommendations of the Tariff Board and introduced the Custom Tariff (Sugar Duties) Bill into Federal Parliament in the same sitting as the Tariff Board's report was presented to the members. However, opposition to further support for the sugar industry resulted in the Bill being amended so that both imported raw cane sugar and beet sugar were subject to a duty of £9.6s.8d.

⁷ In early 1922 the Queensland Government established a Council of Agriculture to develop and administer policies associated with the state's agricultural industries. Various committees, including the Sugar Committee, were established to advise the Council (Shogren, "Agriculture: 1915-1929", pp. 188-189).

⁸ A.S.J., 5 August 1921, p. 252a; A.S.J., 7 October 1921, p. 380; Producers Review, 10 January 1922, p. 35; Producers Review, 10 April 1922, p. 22; A.S.J., 9 June 1922, pp. 132-136; A.S.J., 6 October 1922, pp. 369-70.

⁹ C.P.D., 101 (1922): 3610-15.

In late 1922 Hughes' Nationalist Government was defeated at the elections and the Bruce-Page Coalition Government was formed. Realizing that the new government would seek to further deregulate the sugar industry, representatives of the millers and sugar growers met in Brisbane in February 1923 to formulate new proposals that would be put to Prime Minister Bruce regarding future Commonwealth involvement in the affairs of the industry. This meeting resolved to ask the Federal Government to renew the Sugar Agreement of 1920 for a further five years, or failing that the industry would establish a sugar pool to have control over all the raw sugar produced in Queensland and New South Wales in the next five years. In return, the meeting asked the Commonwealth to prohibit the importation of "black" grown sugar, except if the Australian sugar output could not meet local demands.¹⁰

When the representatives of the sugar industry finally met Prime Minister Bruce, they were correct in their assessment that the new Federal Government wished to de-control the industry. Bruce would not consider renewing the Sugar Agreement of 1920, but agreed to some of the industry's requests. Briefly summarized, the conditions conceded by the Commonwealth were as follows: the industry should form a pool free from Commonwealth control, to buy raw sugar for the 1923-24 season at £27; negotiations should be held with the C.S.R. Co. to refine and distribute the sugar; the embargo against 'black' grown sugar would be maintained until 30 June 1925, although beyond then the industry would be protected by a customs duty; and the price of sugar for the 1924-25 season was to be determined by a tribunal, but the price was not to exceed £27 per ton. Representatives of the sugar industry agreed to the Commonwealth's conditions, which were formalized in the first Australian Sugar Agreement and made operative under the Sugar Commonwealth Act of 1923. This new agreement under which the Commonwealth partially returned the industry's marketing arrangements to the Queensland Government was to last initially for two years.¹¹

To implement the agreement the Queensland Government, using its powers under the Sugar Acquisition Act of 1915, set up a Sugar Board¹² which was to undertake all investigations, negotiations and

¹⁰ A.S.J., 8 February 1923, p. 617.

¹¹ Easterby, The Queensland Sugar Industry, p. 147.

¹² The initial three members of the Sugar Board were appointed in June 1923 (Q.G.G., 121 (1923): 15). A fourth member was added to the Board in August 1923 (Q.G.G., 121 (1923): 464).

recommendations regarding the delivery of raw sugar from the mills to the place of refinement, payment of the proclaimed price and acquisition of the New South Wales crop. This arrangement remains the basis of the marketing of Australia's raw sugar to-day.

As specified by the Sugar Agreement of 1923, a tribunal was appointed in early 1924 to make investigations into the sugar industry, particularly with regard to the payment of £27 per ton of 94 n.t. raw sugar. This tribunal concluded that the price of £27 per ton of 94 n.t. raw sugar was fair and reasonable.¹³ However, in the same year as the tribunal's findings, more raw sugar was produced than Australia could consume. This led to the export of 76,000 tons of raw sugar; the beginning of Australia's export trade in sugar which has continued ever since. However, to meet the loss associated with the export, the sum of £1 per ton of raw sugar was deducted from the price of £27 per ton (see Figure 9.1 and Table 9.2).

In December 1924 the Commonwealth announced that it was prepared to extend the embargo on the importation of foreign sugar into Australia for a further three years, subject to the sugar growers agreeing to certain concessions. After negotiations, an agreement was entered into between the Federal and Queensland Governments which reduced the wholesale price of refined sugar to £37.11s.4d. per ton to £37.6s.8d., but maintained the retail price in main distributing centres at 4½d. per lb. A rebate of £6.5s.1d. per ton on all refined sugar used by fruit processors was introduced and the Queensland Government on behalf of the sugar industry guaranteed that the industry would bear all losses incurred in connexion with the export of surplus sugar.¹⁴ These prices and conditions were renewed for another three years in 1928, but the Federal Government reserved the right to revise Australian prices if increased preference was granted to export sugar from Australia by Great Britain or any Dominion.¹⁵

Operating under the restriction of the Sugar Agreements of 1925 and 1928, the sugar-cane industry in Queensland in the late 1920s began to examine ways to restrict production, to avoid the need to export surplus

¹³ A.S.J., 6 June 1924, p. 147.

¹⁴ Messrs. Townsend et al., "Majority Report of the Sugar Industry Committee, 1930", C.P.P., 3 (1929-1931): 43.

¹⁵ Easterby, The Queensland Sugar Industry, p. 66.

sugar. The effect of surplus sugar on the pool price had been experienced in 1924, but it was re-inforced in 1925 when 227,001 tons of sugar was exported, causing the pool price to fall to £19.10s.7d (see Figure 9.1 and Table 9.2). The impact of such a decline in the price for raw sugar on the industry was discussed at the inaugural sugar conference of the Queensland Cane Growers' Council¹⁶ in January 1926. Resolutions were passed at this meeting affirming the principle of the allocation to each mill of its quota of the sugar required to meet Australian requirements as a solution to surplus sugar production and that the Queensland Cane Growers' Council would formulate a scheme to implement the resolutions.¹⁷

Even though there was this concern about overproduction, nothing was done to limit the 1926 harvest. However, due to the dry seasonal conditions and frosts at Mackay, on the Herbert River and in the southern districts, Queensland's sugar production was considerably less than 1925. Consequently, only 77,633 tons of sugar was exported. The pool price for raw sugar rose to £24.10s.10d. (see Figure 9.1 and Table 9.2). Nevertheless, the Central Cane Prices Board noted in August 1926 that the area planted since March 1925 had increased substantially, despite the efforts of the Board since that time to restrict the assignment of new lands to mills and it appeared that future large harvests were inevitable.¹⁸

The need to restrict sugar output was again discussed at the Annual Conference of the Queensland Cane Growers Council in April 1927. A resolution was passed calling for steps to be taken legislatively to prevent any further land, other than what was being cultivated or now in preparation of being cultivated from being assigned to a mill.¹⁹ In accordance with the Queensland Cane Growers Council's request, the Central Cane Prices Board began in mid-1927 a review of the lands assigned to all the mills throughout Queensland. The Board sent into each district an officer, who collected information from the millers and

¹⁶ The Queensland Cane Growers' Council, created under The Primary Producers' Organization and Marketing Act of 1926, was authorized to manage the affairs of the industry. It was entitled to raise levies to be expended for the benefit of the industry generally or locally. (Easterby, The Queensland Sugar Industry, p. 65).

¹⁷ A.S.J., 11 February 1926, p. 669.

¹⁸ Q.G.G., 127 (1926): 787.

¹⁹ A.S.J., 12 April 1927, p. 69.

growers that enabled it to determine the area for which each grower was entitled to have assigned to a mill. Under the conditions set down by the Board any land which was in a virgin state, or which had not been prepared for planting, or which had been out of cultivation between 1924 and 1926 was to be eliminated from consideration altogether. With respect to lands assigned between 1917 and prior to March 1925, all assignments were to be rescinded and fresh assignments gazetted. Land on which no definite area had been assigned was to be assigned in accordance with the total area used for cane growing, including fallow land and land prepared for planting. Lands where definite areas had been assigned were to be reviewed according to the guidelines and any adjustment made. Finally, no new lands were to be assigned until further notice.²⁰

The review of the lands assigned to the mills throughout Queensland took two years. On the completion of the survey, the Central Cane Prices Board announced the approved assignments in early 1930.²¹ All farmers were now limited to a total area they could cultivate with cane.

During the review of the assignments, Queensland's raw sugar output continued to expand. Exports of raw sugar also increased, causing the pool price to decline. By 1928 millers were receiving £20.17s.11d. compared to £24.10s.10d. in 1926 (see Table 9.2). Continued concern about overproduction and the fall in the pool price led to the Queensland Cane Growers Council at its Annual Conference in 1928 calling for the Peak Year Scheme. The plan envisaged by the representatives of the sugar industry was that the highest output of sugar of each mill in Queensland in any one year since 1915 would be taken as the limit of any future year's production. All sugar produced by any mill beyond its limit or from cane grown on unassigned land would be placed in a separate export pool. It was also suggested that the Peak Year Scheme should operate in conjunction with the Central Cane Prices Board review of assignments.²²

The above scheme was discussed at a special conference of representatives from the sugar industry in June 1929. Its introduction was agreed to by the conference on the condition that the proclamation

²⁰ Q.G.G., 129 (1927): 274.

²¹ Q.G.G., 134 (1930): 1415-78.

²² A.S.J., 4 April 1929, p. 15.

of the mills' peaks should not be sought until after the 1929 season.²³ Thus, it was not until June 1930 that the Central Cane Price Board announced the peaks for the thirty-six mills in Queensland.²⁴

With the introduction of the Peak Year Scheme, the sugar industry became the most regulated of all the Queensland primary industries.²⁵ In addition, its adoption meant the organizational infrastructure of the industry as it operates today had been established with regard to the various bodies representing the different sections of the industry and the administrative arrangements required to control the marketing and production of sugar.

Against this background of concern about overproduction, which eventually led to restrictions on the area cultivated by farmers, it is now possible to consider the changes to the Lower Burdekin sugar industry in the 1920s, especially those associated with the operation of Invicta Mill. Before doing so, however, it is again necessary to review the land openings in the district.

9.3 Land Openings on the Lower Burdekin, 1921-1930

In the 1920s the Labour Government in Queensland continued its policy of closer settlement, although the government's aims were often not particularly successful.²⁶ The government's policy, however, had no impact on the Lower Burdekin, for as shown in the previous chapter all of the suitable Crown land had been made available to settlers. Nevertheless, additional land could be obtained on the Lower Burdekin in the 1920s because of the continued subdivision of the larger freehold cadasters in the district (see Figure 9.2).

On the southern side of the Burdekin River, two large blocks to the south of Home Hill, Kent and Hurney's, were split into small farms in the

²³ A.S.J., 6 June 1929, p. 137; N.Q.R., 28 June 1930, p. 10.

²⁴ G.G.G., 134 (1930): 1961.

²⁵ Johnston, The Call of the Land, p. 181.

²⁶ For details on this topic see K. Kennedy, "William McCormack: Forgotten Labour Leader", in Queensland Political Portraits. Eds. D.J. Murphy and R.B. Joyce (Brisbane: Uni. of Queensland Press, 1980), pp. 353-354.

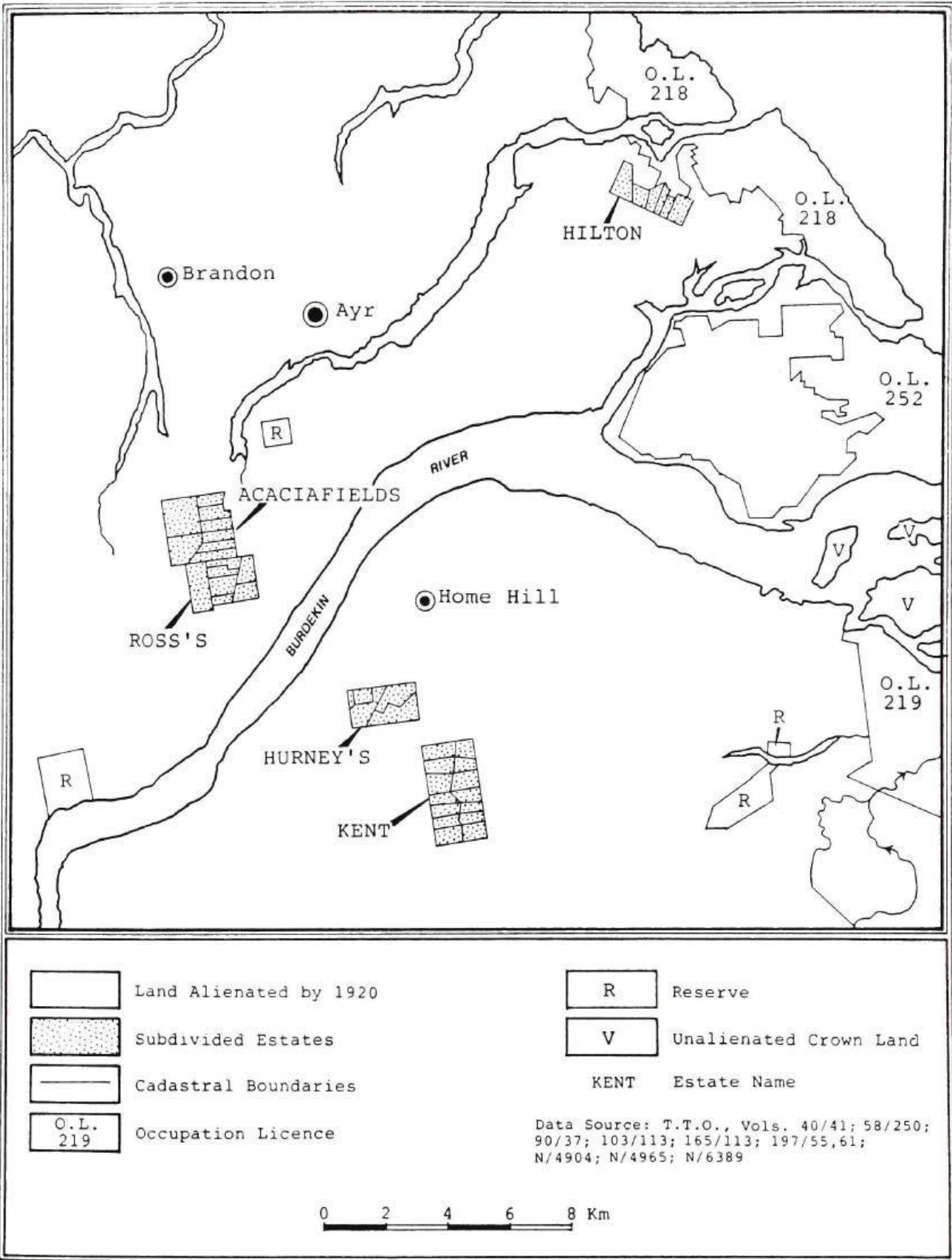


Figure 9.2 Freehold Estate Subdivisions on the Lower Burdekin, 1921-1930.

late 1920s. Most of the blocks were sold by 1930.²⁷ On the northern side of the Burdekin River, Acaciafields Estate, which had been subdivided into two large blocks in 1906, was broken into eight smaller farms in 1923.²⁸ Immediately adjoining Acaciafields on its southern boundary was a block owned by the Ross family, original settlers in the district. It was subdivided in sections throughout the 1920s so that it was completely split into small farms by 1930. William Conley also broke up Hilton Estate in 1923 into six smaller blocks.²⁹ Accompanying these subdivisions were numerous additional subdivisions of the smaller blocks throughout the district, so that by 1930 the eastern section of the Lower Burdekin region was a patchwork of small farms.

The timing of the above subdivisions could not be related to any particular event or events. Indeed, it is reasonable to assume that the splitting up of the blocks on the Lower Burdekin in the 1920s was dependent on when the landowner thought it was best or forced by circumstances to subdivide. However, the steady availability of additional land, which attracted new settlers who almost invariably turned to cane cultivation, led to local concerns about overproduction. Indeed, as will be shown below, the Lower Burdekin mills, with the exception of Invicta, were faced with large crops which they had difficulty in processing.

9.4 Keeping Invicta Mill Supplied

Invicta Mill commenced crushing in July 1921, but by September the Mill's Manager, Mr. Thygesen, realized that its growers were in no position to keep the factory fully supplied.³⁰ John Drysdale, therefore, was asked if he would agree to divert to Invicta some of the remaining uncrushed cane that was to supply Inkerman and Pioneer Mills. John Drysdale, after receiving endorsement from the Inkerman Mill suppliers, agreed to send some of their cane for crushing at Invicta Mill.³¹ Consequently, at the end of its first season, Invicta Mill handled just over 37,000 tons of cane, including 12,000 tons from Inkerman growers and 200 tons from ten Ingham line growers (see Table 9.3). This unusual

²⁷ T.T.O., Vols. 58/250; 165/113.

²⁸ T.T.O., Vol. 40/41.

²⁹ T.T.O., Vols. 90/37; 103/113, 197/55, 61.

³⁰ N.Q.R., 19 September 1921, p. 34.

³¹ N.Q.R., 12 September 1921, p. 10.

Table 9.3. Tons of Cane from the Haughton River, Ayr-Home Hill and Ingham Line Localities Crushed at Invicta Mill, 1921-1930

Year	Locality			Total
	Haughton River (includes Majors Creek District)	Ayr-Home Hill	Ingham Line	
1921	24906	11917	212	37036
1922	-	7736	-	37474
1923	-	0	-	10574
1924	-	0	-	39946*
1925	51728	7046	19559	78333
1926	19160	0	12613	31733
1927	30235	0	28809	59044
1928	40874	0	35813	76687
1929	34752	17285	27690	79547
1930	-	0	-	58218

- No figures provided.

* Includes 12,336 tons of cane from the South Johnstone District.

Source: Constructed from figures provided in the following sources: P.M.B., Register of Pioneer Mill Growers, 1920-1936; "Extracts from the Reports of the Land Commissioner, Townsville, 1921-1930", in Q.P.P.; and Cummins and Campbell's Monthly Magazine, 5, 92 (1934): 77.

Table 9.4. Tons of Cane Crushed at Pioneer, Kalamia and Inkerman Mills, 1921-1930

	Pioneer	Kalamia	Inkerman
1921	89382	69358	109953
1922	93332	70204	118769
1923	58370	42044	74875
1924	93709	69729	148522
1925	145754	123120	171495
1926	72212	78781	98224
1927	93740	105464	125454
1928	124864	158998	165783
1929	134789	174030	164328
1930	131711	126573	171000

Source: Constructed from the figures provided in the following sources: Anon., Pioneer Sugar Mills (Pty.) Ltd., 1884-1958, p. 24; I.M.C., Crushing Figures for Inkerman Mill, 1914-1967; K.M.A., Letterbook 1915-1924, p. 116; and Cummins and Campbell's Monthly Magazine, 5, 82 (1934): 57.

situation of some farmers situated 100 kilometres away from Invicta Mill on the Ingham line sending their cane to the factory for crushing will be considered shortly.

The operation of Invicta Mill in 1921 meant Pioneer Mill was no longer supplied by the fifty Haughton River farmers that had previously sent their cane for crushing at the mill in the late 1910s. This loss of suppliers, however, had little impact on Pioneer Mill's operations, for it managed to crush nearly 90,000 tons in 1921, compared to only just under 60,000 tons in 1920 (see Table 9.4). Moreover, the number of full suppliers to Pioneer Mill slowly climbed in the early 1920s so that by 1925 it received cane from 151 farmers compared to 132 in 1920. This increase can be attributed to more farmers in the Labatt Lagoon, Mirrigan and Colevale/Drynie localities sending cane to Pioneer Mill (see Table 9.5). It appears Pioneer Sugar Mills Ltd. was willing to accept cane from these new growers because it had lost its Haughton River suppliers. Certainly there was no evidence to suggest that John Drysdale tried to restrict the number of farmers supplying Pioneer Mill in the early 1920s.

The first season's operation at Invicta Mill revealed two shortcomings: first, there was a shortage of cane to keep the mill fully supplied; and second, getting the cane to the mill was hampered by the lack of a local tramline. Attempts to remedy the latter problem had been carried out during 1919 and 1920 when Invicta Mill was being erected at Giru, for the Haughton River farmers had petitioned the Thuringowa Shire Council to do one of the following: build the tramline; lend the farmers the capital to construct the tramline; or assist the farmers to pressure the Queensland Government into laying the tramline.³² However, it took until March 1921 before the Thuringowa Shire Council was advised that the Queensland Government would consider an application from the Council for a loan of £16,000 to be used on building the tramline.³³ After considerable discussions, which included an invitation to the Ayr Shire Council to join the project, the Thuringowa Shire Council in October 1921 agreed to approach the Queensland Government for the

³² R. Walton to The Chairman, Thuringowa Shire Council, 14 October 1919, Q.S.A., 11 THU/AIZ, In-letter 209; N.Q.R., 17 November 1919, p. 17; Q.S.A., 11 THU/D6(a), p. 98: Meeting of the Thuringowa Shire Council, 9 June 1920; N.Q.R., 5 July 1920, p. 37; N.Q.R., 21 February 1921, p. 24.

³³ N.Q.R., 7 March 1921, p. 21.

Table 9.5. The Number of Suppliers per Locality in Pioneer Mill's Catchment Area, 1921-1930

Locality	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930
Pioneer Estate	32	33	31	31	30	31	34	33	35	35
Airville	21	20	22	19	22	23	24	25	27	29
Mirrigan	12	13(1)	16(1)	21	25	25	19	15	29	28
Macdesme	20(1)	18(5)	17(1)	20(3)	25	26	24	17	15	21
Labatt Lagoon	12	14	13	15	16	14	15	15	15	14
Maidavale	9	9	9	10	10	13	11	11	11	11
Colevale/Drynie	3	4	4	7	7	8	7	8	8	8
Jarvisfield/Rita Is.	0(8)	0(10)	0(6)	4(29)	3(28)	2	2	0	0	3
Other	1	1(2)	1(6)	1	1(4)	3	1	2(36)	1	2(32)
Unknown	5	5	6	9	12	7	8	5	5	7
Total	115(9) ¹	117(18)	119(13)	137(32)	151(29)	152	145	131(36)	146	158(32)

Note: 1. The figure in brackets refers to the number of partial suppliers of Pioneer Mill.

Source: Constructed from the lists of Pioneer Mill suppliers 1921-1930, found in P.M.B., Register of Pioneer Mill Growers, 1920-1936, after consultation with A.S.C., Rate Books, 1920-1930, and assignment notices (see Q.G.G., 124 (1925): 2196, 2287, 2397; Q.G.G., 134 (1930): 1146-1147; and Q.G.G., 153 (1939): 2273-2274).

loan.³⁴

Before the Crown would approve the loan, a special Committee had to be formed to supervise the tramline's construction and a Tramway Area constituted. To meet these requirements, the Thuringowa Shire Council established in February 1922 a committee, under the chairmanship of Joseph Hodel, to supervise the tramline's erection. The Queensland Government, a month later, announced the formation of the Haughton River Tramway Area.³⁵ Tenders were quickly called for the project and work commenced on the tramline's construction in mid-April 1922.³⁶ After a delay in obtaining sleepers,³⁷ the 2 ft. gauge line - following the same route suggested by the 1917 Royal Commission into a tramline for the Haughton River District - was completed in readiness for the 1923 crushing. The tramline, however, only catered for those farmers located on the western side of the Haughton River. The Haughton Sugar Co. Ltd. tried to remedy this situation in early 1923 by placing portable tramline up the east bank of the Haughton River, in order to reduce the lengthy trip of several miles that the Upper Haughton farmers travelled when bringing their cane to either Hodel or Poopanbah Sidings on the North Coast Railway.³⁸

To improve Invicta's cane supply, the Haughton Sugar Co. Ltd. applied for a Local Board.³⁹ This course of action was adopted because as a Local Board was constituted in respect to one mill and the land or lands assigned to that mill, it was necessary for the Central Cane Prices Board to hold an inquiry to determine if any of the farmers who supplied Kalamia, Inkerman or Pioneer Mills were willing to be assigned to Invicta. The Haughton Sugar Co. Ltd. no doubt believed that some of the farmers supplying the other Lower Burdekin mills who had financed Invicta would seek to be reassigned to it. However, this strategy failed

³⁴ N.Q.R., 4 April 1921, p. 43; Q.S.A., 11 THU/D6(a), p. 221: Meeting of the Thuringowa Shire Council, 10 October 1921.

³⁵ Q.S.A., 11 THU/D6(a), p. 249: Meeting of the Thuringowa Shire Council, 21 February 1922; Q.G.G., 118 (1922): 821.

³⁶ Q.S.A., 11 THU/D6(a), p. 276: Meeting of the Thuringowa Shire Council, 18 April 1922.

³⁷ Q.S.A., 11 THU/D7, p. 8: Meeting of the Thuringowa Shire Council, 10 January 1923.

³⁸ H.S.C.G., "Annual Report of the H.S.C.", 1922, p. 1.

³⁹ Alex. Henry, Brisbane, to The Manager, Kalamia Mill, Ayr, 16 February 1922 (Loose letter, Kalamia Mill, Ayr).



Plate 23 Inkerman Mill, 1923.

Photo: Mathew Fox, The History of Queensland (Brisbane: State Publishing Co., 1923), Vol. 3, p. 719.



Plate 24 Invicta Mill, c. 1930. Note the Ingham line growers' cane in government railwagons in the right middle distance of the photograph.

Photo: Courtesy of Mr G. Stockham, Giru.

for when the list of assignments to Invicta Mill were announced in May 1922 it consisted of only Haughton River farmers.⁴⁰ It was found that neither the other Lower Burdekin millers nor their suppliers were willing to have a portion of their assignments transferred to Invicta Mill.⁴¹ This is not surprising. There would have probably been less than forty growers in the Ayr-Mirrigan and Inkerman-Bowen line localities situated close to the North Coast Railway who could have sent their cane to Invicta. Given the cartage cost, it was unlikely these farmers would have been prepared to entertain such a proposal. Moreover, Pioneer Sugar Mills Ltd. was probably unprepared to relinquish a number of suppliers, especially as some were undoubtedly indebted to the Company.

The gazettal of the farms assigned to Invicta Mill in early 1922 did not stop John Drysdale from diverting nearly 8,000 tons of cane grown for Inkerman Mill to Invicta for crushing in 1922 (see Table 9.3). The Haughton Sugar Co. Ltd., although probably disappointed that the other Lower Burdekin farmers were unwilling to become its suppliers, was undoubtedly grateful for the cane that it was sent from the Inkerman suppliers, in view of the fact that the growers' crops in the Haughton River district were considerably lessened due to damage from cane grubs in 1922.⁴² The diversion of cane from the other Lower Burdekin mills to Invicta for crushing, however, was not a certainty. Indeed, in June 1923 the Cane Inspector at Invicta Mill advised the Directors of the Haughton Sugar Co. Ltd. that they could not expect to receive any cane from the other Lower Burdekin mills during the forthcoming crushing because of the unfavourable season. It was estimated the mill's local growers could supply only 6,000 tons of cane; an additional 3,000 tons would be available from the Ingham line growers.⁴³

Upon receiving the above advice, the Directors of the Haughton Sugar Co. Ltd. decided not to operate Invicta, for it was considered such a small amount of cane could be handled by Pioneer Mill. Eventually, however, the Directors resolved that Invicta Mill would crush in 1923, although as predicted it only crushed just over 10,000 tons of cane (see

⁴⁰ Q.G.G., 118 (1922): 1484-5.

⁴¹ Connolly, John Drysdale and the Burdekin, p. 174.

⁴² Mr. Forster, Manager, Invicta Mill, to G.H. Pritchard, Brisbane, 18 August 1922, J.O.L., A.S.P.A.R., OM/BG/2/15: Haughton Sugar Co. File.

⁴³ H.S.C.G., Minute Book, Vol. 2, p. 154: Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Haughton Sugar Co., 2 June 1923.

Table 9.3). Although detailed figures were not available, it is reasonable to assume that around a third of the year's crop came from the Ingham line growers, who were quickly becoming very important to the struggling mill at Giru.

At this stage it is necessary to divert and explain why the Ingham line growers - located at Toobanna, Bambaroo and Mutarnee - were sending their cane, in some cases, over 120 kilometres south to be crushed at Invicta Mill (see Figure 9.3). As early as July 1920 it was reported that a deputation of Ingham line farmers had approached the Haughton Sugar Co. about the possibility of their cane being crushed at Invicta.⁴⁴ No indication was given as to why the Ingham line growers were trying to find a mill that would accept their cane, but it is reasonable to assume that the two mills at Ingham (i.e. Victoria and Macnade) were unwilling to accept further supplies of cane.⁴⁵ Whatever the reason, the Haughton Sugar Co. Ltd. advised the Ingham line farmers that according to their Articles of Association they had to give preference to cane grown by shareholders, although it was their opinion that the capacity of Invicta could handle their cane and the crops from the mill's shareholders.⁴⁶

As mentioned above, Ingham line growers started supplying Invicta Mill in 1921, but it appears they quickly became dissatisfied with the arrangements. In November 1922 a meeting of Ingham line farmers decided to again approach the C.S.R. Co. about the possibility of Victoria Mill crushing their cane. In addition, they agreed to withdraw their application for the erection of a central mill at Bambaroo before the Harris Royal Commission into the most suitable locations where future sugar mills could be erected in Queensland, indicating that at least in the earlier months of 1922 the growers had considered the possibility of erecting their own mill.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ N.Q.R., 5 July 1920, p. 7.

⁴⁵ Francis Fraser, representing the Ingham line farmers, advised the Harris Royal Commission that they had approached the C.S.R. Co. in November 1920 about getting their cane crushed at Victoria Mill, but received no reply to their request (N.Q.R., 27 November 1922, p. 15).

⁴⁶ Sec., Haughton Sugar Co., to the Sec., Yurugan and Bambaroo Cane Growers' Association, 4 August 1920 (reproduced in N.Q.R., 27 November 1922, p. 16).

⁴⁷ N.Q.R., 27 November 1922, pp. 15-16.

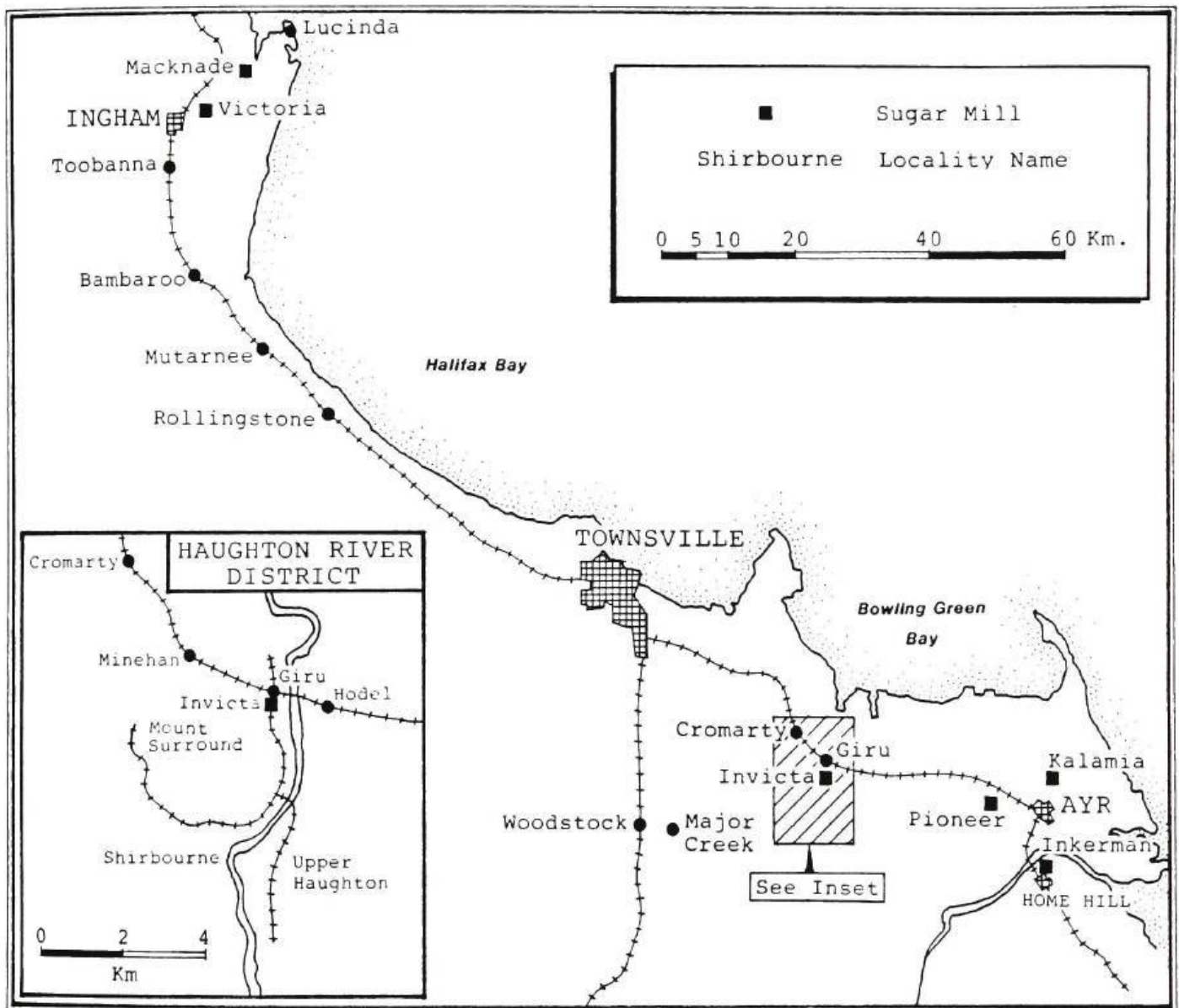


Figure 9.3 The Location of the Ingham Line District in Relation to the Haughton River District.

As a result of withdrawing their application for a central mill and the presumed negative response from the C.S.R. Co., the Ingham line growers had no alternative but to continue supplying Invicta Mill. However, by late 1924 they had realized that there was no guarantee that their cane would continue to be accepted by Invicta Mill. As such, the Ingham line growers petitioned the Central Cane Prices Board to have their lands assigned to Invicta Mill⁴⁸. The Haughton Sugar Co. Ltd. objected to such an application, claiming that they had contracted with the suppliers of Kalamia, Pioneer and Inkerman Mills to give their surplus cane priority. The Central Cane Prices Board was persuaded by this argument and refused the application by the Ingham line growers. However, in February 1925 the Ingham line growers asked the Central Cane Prices Board to reconsider their request.⁴⁹ To understand the closeness of the two applications requires a brief examination of what was happening to the Haughton Sugar Co. Ltd., particularly in regard to its shareholders who supplied the other Lower Burdekin mills.

Financially the Haughton Sugar Co. Ltd. had not been performing well since its inception. It had accrued considerable debts in re-erecting Invicta Mill at Giru and the small supply of cane, declining prices for raw sugar after 1922 and poor performance by the mill's out-dated machinery⁵⁰ meant £98,041 was owing to Buss Bros., Bundaberg, the Commercial Bank of Australia and sundry creditors on 31.1.1924. Included in this amount was £28,537 lent by the farmers who supplied the other Lower Burdekin Mills.⁵¹

In February 1924 the Lower Burdekin farmers, who had provided funds to establish Invicta Mill through levies on their yearly crops, elected a committee which was to meet with the Haughton Sugar Co. Ltd. to arrange for the payment of this money. At this meeting between both parties, the Burdekin farmers suggested that they should be admitted as shareholders of the company and assured a fair share of Invicta Mill's

⁴⁸ N.Q.R., 27 October 1924, p. 37.

⁴⁹ N.Q.R., 2 February 1925, p. 8.

⁵⁰ For comments on Invicta's defective machinery see W.F. Rankin, "Chemist's Report, 1921" in H.S.C.G., "Annual Report of the H.S.C., 1921", p. 1, and W.F. Rankin, "Chemist's Report, 1922", in H.S.C.G., "Annual Report of the H.S.C., 1922", pp. 1-2.

⁵¹ Harry Burstall, "A Brief History of the Haughton Sugar Co. Ltd.", p. 2. 6 pp. typescript dated 22.4.1933. Located at the Haughton Sugar Co.'s office at Giru.

capacity in the event of overproduction in the district. The Directors of the Haughton Sugar Co. Ltd. agreed to refer the committee's proposal to its shareholders, although they advised the Burdekin farmers that it was preferable to pool the cane supplied to the other three mills and allot a sufficient amount to Invicta to ensure it could be profitably operated.⁵²

Following the above meeting, considerable negotiations were held between the shareholders in the Haughton Sugar Co. Ltd. and the committee representing the Burdekin farmers, so that in July 1924 an agreement was reached to reconstruct the Haughton Sugar Co. Ltd. It was proposed that a new company would have a capital of £150,000 made up of 150,000 shares of £1 each. The present shareholders and the Burdekin farmers who had paid levies were to receive shares in the new company equal to the number of shares they held or the amount they had advanced to the Haughton Sugar Co. Ltd. After receiving the approval of the Burdekin farmers for this scheme, the Directors of the Haughton Sugar Co. Ltd. appointed a liquidator to wind up the old company.⁵³

Formation of the new Haughton Sugar Company Co. Ltd. took several months and it was not incorporated until 25 May 1925. To pay for the fees associated with the company's reconstruction, the Directors issued an additional 40,000 shares which could be purchased by cane growers and the public generally.⁵⁴ Funds from the sale of these shares were also directed towards overhauling Invicta's plant and installing new machinery; tasks which had been neglected according to F.G. Winzar, who was appointed the mill's new manager in early 1925.⁵⁵

In light of the above discussion, it is reasonable to assume that the Ingham line growers applied again so quickly for their lands to be assigned to Invicta Mill after their failed attempt in late 1924 because they feared total abandonment, now that the Burdekin farmers were shareholders in a restructured Haughton Sugar Co. Ltd. and liable to insist that their surplus cane be given priority treatment at Invicta Mill.

⁵² N.Q.R., 3 March 1924, p. 88.

⁵³ N.Q.R., 3 November 1924, p. 58; N.Q.R., 11 November 1924, p. 31.

⁵⁴ N.Q.R., 23 February 1925, p. 19; H.S.C.G., "Annual Report of the H.S.C., 1925-1926", p. 1.

⁵⁵ F. Winzar, Giru, to John Drysdale, Pioneer Estate, 1 April 1925, J.C.U., PMB/LB/15, n.pag.

Moreover, the Ingham line growers were obviously well aware the 1925 crop would be quite large and that the Haughton Sugar Co. Ltd. had made arrangements with the other Lower Burdekin mills to accept their surplus cane.⁵⁶ Indeed, soon after the 1925 crushing season commenced, cane from the Mirrigan locality which was grown for Pioneer Mill was sent to Invicta, although according to one report this arrangement ceased when it was announced in July 1925 that the Central Cane Prices Board had agreed to assign the Ingham line growers' land to Invicta Mill.⁵⁷ On the other hand, a second report several months later noted that Invicta Mill was still accepting cane grown for the other Lower Burdekin mills and that the Haughton River farmers were petitioning the Central Cane Prices Board to stop this occurring.⁵⁸ Whatever the case, Invicta Mill handled just over 78,000 tons of cane in 1925; its biggest crop to date (see Table 9.3). More importantly, however, was the assignment in January 1926 of the lands of ninety-one Ingham line growers to Invicta Mill.⁵⁹ This ensured that Invicta would now receive a regular and adequate supply of cane, yet created a situation where the Lower Burdekin farmers who had recently become shareholders in the mill were now in no way assured of having their surplus cane crushed at Invicta.

In contrast to the shortage of cane that troubled Invicta Mill in 1921 and 1922, Inkerman Mill was taxed to its capacity, crushing over 105,000 tons of cane in each year and diverting part of the crop intended for it to Invicta Mill.⁶⁰ However, concern about Inkerman's ability to handle the large crops being grown for it and the cost of diverting cane to other mills led to the I.F.G.A. arranging a deputation to wait upon John Drysdale to discuss the question of increased milling power in the district.⁶¹ It is reasonable to assume that the I.F.G.A. received little satisfaction from their interview with John Drysdale, for a year later it petitioned the Harris Royal Commission to consider a site on the Inkerman Estate lands as a place to erect a government sponsored mill. The Inkerman farmers argued that they were capable of producing 500,000

⁵⁶ N.Q.R., 2 February 1925, p. 23.

⁵⁷ N.Q.R., 27 July 1925, p. 32.

⁵⁸ N.Q.R., 19 October 1925, p. 98.

⁵⁹ Q.G.G., 126 (1926): 141-142.

⁶⁰ Proserpine Mill also received 8,000 tons of cane grown for Inkerman Mill in 1921 (I.M.C., *Crushing Figures*, 1914-1967).

⁶¹ N.Q.R., 3 October 1921, p. 71.

tons of cane a year, but even if they could grow only half that amount they could fully supply Inkerman and another mill. It was also stressed that the government had gone to great expense in providing an irrigation scheme in the district, and that the only means by which it could be paid for was by increasing their sugar crops.

The Harris Royal Commission, however, heard different evidence from John Drysdale. His opinion was that the Inkerman farmers had not the land to furnish another 100,000 tons of cane outside of the supply to Inkerman Mill. Moreover, Pioneer Sugar Mills Ltd. was contemplating expanding the capacity of both their mills and in the event of a very heavy crops, cane could be sent to Invicta and Proserpine mills, which were both short of cane. The Royal Commissioners also heard from the Manager of Kalamia Mill that Australian Estates was proposing to increase the capacity of Kalamia Mill.

After its investigations, the Harris Royal Commission recommended that the government mill should be built at Tully and that the erection of another mill on the Lower Burdekin should be given consideration, if the irrigation scheme increased the production of cane to such an extent as to be beyond the capacity of the milling power of the district, assisted by Proserpine Mill, and it was established that crops other than cane could not be profitably raised in the district. The Royal Commission noted, however, that the evidence from the Manager of the State Farm at Home Hill showed there were great possibilities for crops other than cane. Maize, tomatoes, peanuts and potatoes grew luxuriantly.⁶² Despite the Commission's recommendation, consideration was not given again in the 1920s to the erection of a government sponsored mill on the Lower Burdekin.

The Inkerman farmers' immediate concerns about the ability of Inkerman Mill to handle the large crops being grown for it were partially met in early 1924 when its capacity was upgraded through the installation of a new, coal-fired boiler and additional power house.⁶³ As a result, Inkerman Mill was able to crush 148,000 and 171,000 tons of cane in 1924 and 1925 respectively without the need to divert cane to either Invicta

⁶² See C.W. Harris et al., "Report of the Royal Commission appointed to Inquire into the Most Suitable Locations for Sugar Mills which may be Erected in the Near Future", Q.P.P., 2 (1923): 204.

⁶³ N.Q.R., 28 July 1924, p. 91; T. Easterby, "Annual Report of the B.S.E.S., 1923-1924", Q.P.P., 2 (1925): 710.

or Proserpine Mills (see Table 9.4). Nevertheless, the Inkerman farmers still expressed concern about the mill's capabilities. They argued that the increase in the number of farmers on the southern side of the Burdekin in the early 1920s meant there was no need for the forty to sixty growers at Jarvisfield, Rita Island, Macdesme and Mirrigan to be sending their cane to Inkerman for crushing (see Table 9.6). Indeed, the Inkerman farmers argued that some of this cane, which comprised twenty per cent of the yearly crops crushed at Inkerman Mill in the early 1920s (see Table 9.7), should be redirected to Pioneer Mill. The majority of the cane, however, could be sent to Kalamia Mill.⁶⁴ The growers would not be disadvantaged, as all the Lower Burdekin Mills in the early 1920s paid the same price for their cane.⁶⁵

Kalamia Mill was supplied by around one hundred growers between 1919 and 1924 (see Tables 8.5 and 9.8). This was slightly below the number of farmers who sent cane to Pioneer Mill between 1921 and 1924 and considerably under the number of Inkerman Mill suppliers in the early 1920s. It was no doubt partially the reason for Kalamia only crushing crops of around 70,000 tons of cane a year before 1924 (see Table 9.4). The other factor contributing to the mill's small crops was that its farmers were unable to grow more cane because of the factory's limited capacity.⁶⁶ However, Australian Estates in late 1924 embarked on extensive alterations to Kalamia Mill. It included the installation of a new chimney, sugar store, spray pond, boilers, triple efferts, duplication of the milling train and the construction of a new railway from Kalamia Mill to Ayr.⁶⁷ Indeed, Australian Estates by early 1926 had spent over £100,000 on improvements, with much of the machinery for Kalamia coming from the Palms Mill at Mackay, which had closed after the 1924 crushing season.⁶⁸ Therefore, the Inkerman farmers' suggestion

⁶⁴ N.Q.R., 10 August 1925, p. 95; N.Q.R., 25 September 1925, p. 61; N.Q.R., 14 December 1925, p. 9.

⁶⁵ Deduced from an examination of the Local Cane Prices Awards for the Lower Burdekin Mills found in Q.G.G.

⁶⁶ Mr. Clapham, "A Report on Kalamia Mill, 10 February 1928", 4 pp. typescript (Loose document, Kalamia Mill, Ayr).

⁶⁷ N.Q.R., 23 February 1925, p. 95; N.Q.R., 28 September 1925, p. 61; T. Easterby, "Annual Report of the B.S.E.S., 1926", Q.P.P., 2 (1927): 651; Anon., Kalamia Sugar Mill: The First Hundred Years, p. 5.

⁶⁸ The Manager, A.E.M. Co., Melbourne, to The Manager, Kalamia Mill, Ayr, 1 March 1926 (Loose letter, Kalamia Mill, Ayr); The Manager, A.E.M. Co., Melbourne, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, 1 April 1926, M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book No. 28, p. 83.

Table 9.6. The Number of Suppliers per Locality in Inkerman Mill's Catchment Area, 1921-1930

Locality	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930
Inkerman	56	61	50	63	66	66	59	59	55	54(2)
Osborne	38	41	44	47	45	49	46	50	53	51
Down River	22	25	21	22	28	28	30	29	27	29
Iona	17	14	14	19	24	27	28	28	23	25(2)
Bowen Line	21	19	23	25	25	25	28	27	0	3(21)
Fredericksfield	5	5	5	4	6	6	3	4	3	3(2)
Gumlu	11	13	4	0	13	5	5	6	0	0
Jarvisfield/Rita Is.	35	31	26	38	49	13(25)	0	0	0	0
Macdesme/Mirrigan	11(11) ¹	14	16	18	12	0	12	10	0	0
Other	2(10)	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Unknown	20[6] ²	24(6)	16[8]	16[3]	20[7]	12[0]	4[0]	5[0]	5[2]	10[0]
Total	238(21)	247	219	252	289	231(25)	212 ³	218	166 ⁴	175(25) ⁵

Notes:

1. The figure in brackets refers to the number of partial suppliers of Inkerman Mill.
2. The figure in brackets indicates the number of growers who supplied less than 100 tons.
3. Jarvisfield and Rita Island Growers were reassigned to Kalamia Mill.
4. Thirty-five Inkerman growers situated at Gumlu and in the Bowen Line and Iona localities supplied Invicta Mill.
5. Six Inkerman growers supplied Invicta Mill. Twenty-six growers mainly located in the Bowen Line Locality partially supplied Pioneer Mill.

Source: Constructed from the lists of Inkerman Mill suppliers, 1921-1930, found at Inkerman Mill, Carstairs, after consultation with A.S.C., Rate Books, 1920-1930, and assignment notices (see Q.G.G., 124 (1925): 2397, 2524; Q.G.G., 126 (1926): 1572; Q.G.G., 134 (1930): 1428-9; and Q.G.G., 153 (1930): 2252-2254).

Table 9.7. Tons of Cane Crushed at Inkerman Mill Classified by the Localities from which it was Harvested, 1921-1930

Locality	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930
South of the Burdekin River (excluding Gumlu)	75987 (69.1)	82952 (70)	53945 (72)	120150 (80.8)	127673 (74.4)	89150 (90.7)	120857 (96.4)	158557 (95.6)	160741 (97.8)	160906 (94)
Jarvisfield/Rita Island	23356 (21)	21288 (17.9)	9640 (13)	16379 (11)	32868 (19)	5557 (5.6)	0	0	0	0
Mirrigan/Macdesme	4064 (3.6)	5769 (4.8)	6773 (9)	5626 (4)	1569 (0.9)	0	2939 (2.3)	3041 (1.8)	0	0
Gumlu	922 (0.8)	2810 (2.4)	100 (0.1)	0	2360 (1.4)	91 (.09)	151 (.1)	768 (.5)	0	0
Other	372 (0.3)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unknown	5181 (4.7)	5950 (5)	4417 (5.9)	6376 (4.2)	7025 (4)	3426 (3.5)	1507 (1.2)	3417 (2)	2938 (1.7)	10094 (5.9)
TOTAL	109953	118769	74875	148522	171495	98224	125454	165783	164328	171000

Note: The figure in brackets refers to the percentage of the total.

Sources: I.M.C., Crushing Figures for Inkerman Mill, 1914-1967.
I.M.C., List of Inkerman Mill Growers, 1921-1930.
Table 9.6.

Table 9.8. The Number of Suppliers per Locality in Kalamia Mill's Catchment Area, 1921-1926 and 1929-30

Locality	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1929	1930
Airdmillan	29	30	30	33	34	32	36	36
Jarvisfield/ Lower Jarvisfield	26	29	26	27	30	45	43	42
Ivanhoe/Norham	16	19	16	17	19	21	23	24
Macdesme	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	14
Rita Island	0	0	0	0	0	19	20	20
Ayr	7	7	8	8	9	10	7	6
Kalamia/New Kalamia	7	5	6	6	6	6	4	4
Chiverton	6	6	4	3	5	5	7	8
Seaforth	3	3	3	4	4	3	3	3
Unknown	4	1	0	0	9	5	5	6
TOTAL	98	100	93	98	116	146	162	163

Source: Constructed from the "Lists of Individual Tonnage and Average C.C.S. of every Kalamia Supplier, 1921-1926", found at Kalamia Mill, Ayr, and the "Lists of Growers for Kalamia Mill 1929-1936" found in the Kalamia Mill Suppliers Committee Office, Ayr, after consultation with A.S.C., Rate Books, 1920-1930, and assignment notices (see Q.G.G., 124 (1925): 2287, 2336, 2524; Q.G.G., 126 (1926): 1572; Q.G.G., 134 (1930): 1429-31; and Q.G.G., 153 (1939): 2254-2256).

concerning the re-assignment of growers to Kalamia was greeted approvingly but cautiously by Australian Estates, who also found that Pioneer Sugar Mills Ltd. was willing to relinquish all their assigned cane lands in the Jarvisfield and Rita Island localities.⁶⁹

Initially, Australian Estates were not in favour of accepting Pioneer Sugar Mill's offer. It believed the areas John Drysdale proposed to relinquish to be capable of producing more cane than Kalamia Mill could handle without further costly additions and that the farms were served by a 3 ft. 6 in. gauge tramline which was not compatible with Kalamia's 2 ft. tramline system. Australian Estates, however, in late November 1925 were prepared to relieve Pioneer Sugar Mills Ltd. of a defined area lying north of the latter's tramline through the Macdesme-Jarvisfield locality, but not the Rita Island farmers.⁷⁰

As the hearing date in mid-February 1926 for the petition by the Inkerman farmers for the re-assignment of the cane lands on the northern side of the Burdekin River drew nearer, Australian Estates' view on this matter changed. The Melbourne Office, after considering the position that the Queensland sugar industry faced as a result of overproduction, decided that cane production on the Lower Burdekin would have to be reduced. Australian Estates reasoned that the area under cane on the Inkerman side of the Burdekin River would not be reduced significantly due to the Queensland Government's interest in the Inkerman Irrigation Scheme. Therefore, the other Lower Burdekin mills would face substantial cuts in their outputs. Accordingly, Australian Estates instructed the Manager of Kalamia Mill to accept as great a quantity of land as the Central Cane Prices Board would assign to Kalamia. This would enable a higher percentage of cane supply when the cuts were made.⁷¹

At the hearing for the transfer of the Jarvisfield-Rita Island lands John Drysdale informed the Central Cane Prices Board that Pioneer Mill was only able to accept a small portion of the cane grown north of the Burdekin River and assigned to Inkerman Mill. Australian Estates, on the

⁶⁹ The Manager, A.E.M. Co., Melbourne, to The Manager, Kalamia Mill, 9 February 1926 (Loose letter, Kalamia Mill, Ayr).

⁷⁰ The Manager, A.E.M. Co., Melbourne, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, 26 November 1925, M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book No. 27, p. 365.

⁷¹ The Manager, A.E.M. Co., to The Manager, Kalamia Mill, Ayr, 9 February 1926 (Loose letter, Kalamia Mill, Ayr).

other hand, advised the Board that it was willing to have all the lands in the Jarvisfield-Rita Island locality assigned to Kalamia Mill. The growers who supplied Kalamia, however, objected to Australian Estates' offer, claiming that they should now be given some scope to place additional land under cane, for they had been unable to do so in the past because of the "unsympathetic attitude of Australian Estates and the limited capacity of Kalamia Mill". Nevertheless, the Kalamia growers would agree to the assignment of the Jarvisfield and Rita Island lands to Kalamia Mill, provided only between 1,200 and 1,500 acres of cane was harvested each year from the area assigned to the mill. Australian Estates agreed to this offer, but the farmers at Jarvisfield and Rita Island objected to such a restriction being placed on the acreage they could cultivate, while other Lower Burdekin farmers were still able to put additional areas under cane.⁷²

As a result of the above hearing, the Central Cane Prices Board re-assigned forty-five Inkerman farmers located at Jarvisfield and Rita Island to Kalamia Mill (see Figure 9.4). This transfer of assignments provided Kalamia Mill with a minimum addition of 1,500 acres of cane land. The new assignments, however, covered only a portion of each of the farms, despite the whole block being previously assigned to Inkerman Mill. The Jarvisfield and Rita Island farmers unsuccessfully appealed against this arrangement;⁷³ their assignments, however, remained unaltered until all assignments in Queensland were reviewed in 1928-29.

The willingness of John Drysdale to surrender the Jarvisfield and Rita Island lands that Pioneer Sugar Mills Ltd. had sought to dominate in the early 1910s requires a brief explanation. As mentioned earlier, despite the loss of the Haughton River growers, Pioneer and Inkerman Mills were adequately supplied in the early 1920s. Indeed, according to the evidence before the hearing into the transfer of the Jarvisfield and Rita Island growers to Kalamia Mill, John Drysdale acknowledged that Pioneer Sugar Mills Ltd. had more cane than it could comfortably

⁷² N.Q.R., 22 February 1926, p. 59; The Manager, A.E.M. Co., Melbourne, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., London, 4 March 1926, M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book No. 28, p. 15.

⁷³ N.Q.R., 26 July 1926, p. 23; N.Q.R., 9 August 1926, p. 89; N.Q.R., 18 April 1927, p. 60.

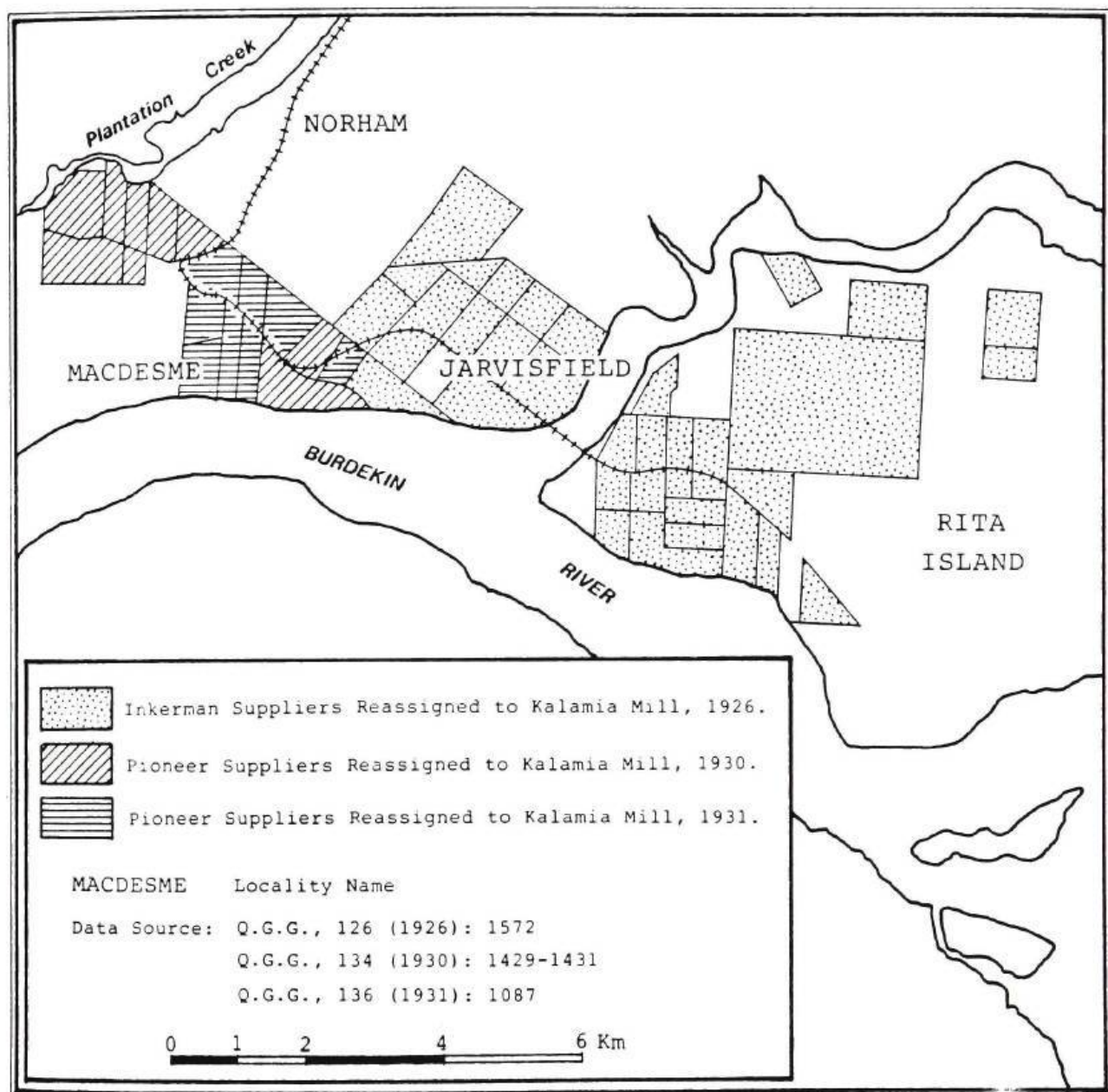


Figure 9.4 Farmers Reassigned to Kalamia Mill, 1926-1931

handle.⁷⁴ Accordingly, the surrender of the lands at Jarvisfield and Rita Island would have relieved Pioneer Sugar Mills Ltd. of growers that were no longer required to supply its mills, especially Inkerman. However, why did John Drysdale fail to expand both mills' capacities to cope with the additional cane? It is reasonable to assume that John Drysdale, who was an elderly gentleman in 1926, no longer had the youthful energy and inclination to undertake the task of upgrading Pioneer and Inkerman Mills so that they could crush all the cane grown by their suppliers. Indeed, according to Robertson, when John Drysdale died in 1928 the two mills owned by Pioneer Sugar Mills Ltd. contained inadequate plant and equipment, and were in much the same state that they had been in the late 1910s.⁷⁵

To transport the cane from the Jarvisfield and Rita Island localities to Kalamia Mill, Australian Estates purchased from Pioneer Sugar Mills Ltd. a section of its tramway from Rita Island to Kilrie farm, converted this line into 2 ft. gauge and connected it to Kalamia's tramways system ending at the Norham terminus.⁷⁶ However, the tonnages Kalamia Mill received from the farmers at Jarvisfield and Rita Island were easily catered for by the expanded capacity of the factory. Indeed, Kalamia Mill's Manager believed that Kalamia with its double milling train could easily handle additional cane. Accordingly, during 1927 he suggested to Pioneer Sugar Mills Ltd. that Australian Estates would be willing to take any of their surplus cane.⁷⁷ In reply, Pioneer Sugar Mills Ltd. advised Australian Estates that it was prepared to let Kalamia Mill have about 15,000 tons of cane from its growers situated in the western part of the Macdesme locality, around Kalamia's new tramline, because Pioneer Mill would be unable to handle the large crop being grown for it in 1928.⁷⁸

Unfortunately, since Kalamia Mill's list of suppliers for 1928 could

⁷⁴ N.Q.R., 22 February 1926, p. 59. See also The Manager, A.E.M. Co., Melbourne, to The Manager, Kalamia Mill, Ayr, 9 February 1926 (Loose letter, Kalamia Mill, Ayr).

⁷⁵ Ian Robertson, Pioneer Sugar Mill - 100 years (Brisbane: Pioneer Sugar Mills Ltd., 1984), p. 8.

⁷⁶ R.H. Farrar, Kalamia Mill to J. Drysdale, Pioneer Estate, 1 July 1926, J.C.U., PMR/LB/15, n.pag.

⁷⁷ R.H. Farrar, "Kalamia Mill's Annual Report, 1927" (Loose document, Kalamia Mill, Ayr).

⁷⁸ The Manager, Pioneer Sugar Mill, to The Manager, Kalamia Mill, 19 March 1928, J.C.U., PMR/LB/48, n.pag.



Plate 25 Kalamia Mill undergoing extensive alterations, 1926.

Photo: Courtesy of John Oxley Library.



Plate 26 Building of the new spray pond at Kalamia Mill, 1926.

Photo: A.N.U., Archives of Business and Labour, A.E.R. 165/142.

not be located, it is difficult to say how much cane from the Macdesme locality was sent to Kalamia in 1928. All that can be said conclusively is that eight Pioneer growers situated at Macdesme in 1927 did not supply Pioneer Mill in 1928. It is reasonable to assume that their crops went to Kalamia Mill. Certainly, their cane was handled by Kalamia in 1929 and 1930, when altogether fourteen farmers at Macdesme supplied Kalamia (see Table 9.8). Seven of these farmers were finally assigned to Kalamia Mill in 1930 after the revision of assignments carried out by the Central Cane Prices Board in late 1928. Another nine suppliers of Pioneer Mill - seven at Macdesme and two at Jarvisfield - were also assigned to Kalamia in 1931 (see Figure 9.4). Consequently, almost two decades after Drysdale Bros. were able to convince Kalamia's suppliers at Macdesme to supply Pioneer Mill, Australian Estates regained a number of growers situated at Macdesme.

The loss of suppliers at Macdesme had little impact on the amount of cane crushed at Pioneer Mill after 1928 (see Table 9.4) or the overall number of suppliers to the mill (see Table 9.5). This happened because of an increase in the number of growers at Airville - a consequence of the subdivision of Acaciafields and Ross's estates - and the need to take the crops from ten to twelve farmers at Mirrigan and Macdesme who normally supplied Inkerman Mill. Inkerman, like Pioneer Mill in the late 1920s, was also having difficulties in crushing all the cane being grown for it by the factory's suppliers. Indeed, the Manager at Inkerman Mill in 1929 found it necessary to direct just over 17,000 tons of cane from Inkerman farmers situated in the Bowen Line and Iona localities to Invicta Mill (see Table 9.6).

And what of Invicta Mill in the late 1920s? Financially, the Haughton Sugar Co. Ltd. was facing bankruptcy in 1925: inadequate cane supply and poor performance by the mill had taken its toll. However, under the leadership of Harry Burstall - a Kalamia supplier who became Chairman of the Board of the Directors of the Haughton Sugar Co. Ltd. in 1925 - operations at Invicta Mill entered a more profitable phase. Burstall was able to convince Invicta's suppliers in 1926, 1927 and 1928 to agree to levies of 3s.9d., 1s.6d. and 8d. respectively on each ton of cane they delivered to the mill; in return they received shares in the Haughton Sugar Co. Ltd.⁷⁹ These funds were used to reduce the

⁷⁹ Burstall, "A Brief History of the Haughton Sugar Co. Ltd.", pp. 3-4; N.Q.R., 29 November 1928, p. 88; N.Q.R., 6 December 1926, p. 89; N.Q.R., 9 July 1928, p. 84.

company's debt to some of its creditors and to upgrade the mill. Indeed, improvements to Invicta Mill between 1925 and 1929 cost £30,000 and included new fugals and a weighbridge, alterations to the pan stage and boiler stations and expansion of the size of the sugar shed.⁸⁰ In addition, the Haughton Sugar Co. Ltd. in 1928 financed the extension of Invicta Mill's tramline network to the Upper Haughton River locality, after attempts to get the Thuringowa and Ayr Shire Councils and the Queensland Government to do so failed.⁸¹ Many of these improvements were only made possible because John Drysdale in 1925 permitted funds to be spent on the mill instead of reducing the £12,000 overdraft guaranteed by him.⁸²

As a result of the above improvements, Invicta Mill by 1929 was crushing 30 tons of cane an hour, compared to 18.3 in 1922 and taking 6.78 tons of cane to produce a ton of sugar instead of the 8.38 tons it needed in 1922.⁸³ This improved efficiency together with greater supplies of cane (see Table 9.3) meant the Haughton Sugar Co. Ltd. returned profits on its operations after 1926.⁸⁴ More importantly, in April 1928 the Directors were able to reach an arrangement with the National Bank of Australasia Ltd. whereby the amount owing to Buss Bros. and John Drysdale was liquidated.⁸⁵

Much of the improved cane supply to Invicta Mill in the late 1920s came about because the factory was now supplied by the Ingham line growers. However, the Ingham line growers were not pleased with the arrangements. In early 1927 they petitioned the Central Cane Prices Board to assign them 2,000 acres additional cane growing land, transferred from the Haughton River district. It was argued that the Haughton River

⁸⁰ H.S.C.G., "Annual Report of the H.S.C., 1925-1926", p. 1, H.S.C.G., "Annual Report of the H.S.C., 1926-1927", p. 1; N.Q.R., 24 December 1928, p. 87; A.S.J., 7 September 1929, p. 377.

⁸¹ Q.S.A., 11 THU/D7, p. 347: Meeting of the Thuringowa Shire Council, 18 November 1927; Q.S.A., 11 THU/D8, p. 6: Meeting of the Thuringowa Shire Council, 15 February 1928; H.S.C.G., "Annual Report of the H.S.C., 1927-1928", p. 2.

⁸² N.Q.R., 9 July 1925, p. 84. See also Connolly, John Drysdale and the Burdekin, p. 174.

⁸³ H.S.C.G., "Annual Report of the H.S.C., 1922", p. 2; H.S.C.G., "Annual Report of the H.S.C., 1929-1930", p. 1.

⁸⁴ H.S.C.G., "Annual Reports of the H.S.C., 1926-1930", *passim*.

⁸⁵ H.S.C.G., "Annual Report of the H.S.C., 1928-1929", p. 1.

farmers could not keep Invicta Mill fully supplied, yet if they were given the chance the factory would receive more than adequate amounts of cane.⁸⁶ The Central Cane Prices Board was not convinced by the Ingham line growers' arguments; no such reassignment occurred. The Ingham line growers did not let the matter rest, however, for in 1929 they called upon the Queensland Government to erect a central mill at Toobanna or Rollingsstone.⁸⁷ This did not occur and the Ingham line growers continued to send their cane to Invicta Mill for the next thirty years, until they were reassigned to Victoria Mill following a review of the allocation of suppliers to Queensland mills in 1963-64.⁸⁸

9.5 Avoiding Overproduction

As mentioned in Chapter 7.6, John Drysdale had tried to restrict the amount of cane grown on the Lower Burdekin in the 1900s, although his efforts were not particularly successful. Indeed, John Drysdale informed the Piddington Royal Commission that he had now no control at all over the area planted, for the farmers "absolutely decline to be limited in their planting".⁸⁹ Similar sentiments were expressed at the Harris Royal Commission.⁹⁰ However, concern about the imminent danger of oversupply to the mills was voiced by the Lower Burdekin Farmers' Association representative at the Piddington Royal Commission.⁹¹

Instead of trying to restrict the areas they cultivated in the early 1920s the Lower Burdekin farmers, as shown earlier, used Invicta Mill to take their surplus cane and were also successful in getting the millers to upgrade their factories to handle the additional crops. However, in late 1924 the Lower Burdekin Farmers' Association expressed unease about the

⁸⁶ N.Q.R., 7 February 1927, p. 73.

⁸⁷ N.Q.R., 25 March 1929, p. 30; N.Q.R., 1 April 1929, p. 30; N.Q.R., 15 April 1929, p. 28.

⁸⁸ Invicta Mill was assigned suppliers at Clare, Dalbeg and Millaroo in lieu of its Ingham line growers. (Q.G.G., 217 (1964): 1733-40; Q.G.G., 220 (1965): 1153-54; Lewis, Clare Centenary, pp. 32-33.)

⁸⁹ Ev. J. Drysdale, in A.B. Piddington et al., "Evidence of the Royal Commission on the Sugar Industry, 1920", p. 374.

⁹⁰ C.W. Harris et al., "Report of the Royal Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Most Suitable Locations for Sugar Mills which may be erected in the Near Future", Q.P.P., 2 (1923): 203.

⁹¹ Ev. A. Dean, in A.B. Piddington et al., "Evidence of the Royal Commission on the Sugar Industry, 1920", p. 364.

continued tendency throughout the district to place additional areas under cane.⁹² The seriousness of the problem must have become all too apparent in 1925 when the Lower Burdekin mills were faced with crushing record crops, for the Lower Burdekin Farmers' Association and the I.F.G.A. called upon the Central Cane Prices Board not to assign new lands to the district's mills and to revise existing assignments.⁹³ Such sentiments were it appears not shared by Harry Burstall, Chairman of the Board of the Directors of the Haughton Sugar Co. Ltd., who advised the farmers in the Haughton River district that Invicta Mill's capacity had been upgraded so as to induce them to grow more cane.⁹⁴ Overproduction was not a problem for Invicta Mill, struggling to get adequate cane supplies.

If John Drysdale was concerned about overproduction he was strangely quiet about it in the early 1920s. Perhaps his interest in either erecting a power alcohol factory adjacent to Pioneer Mill or establishing a megass factory in the district occupied much of his time,⁹⁵ or he may have believed that Invicta Mill would be willing to accept the excess cane. Australian Estates, on the other hand, were of the opinion that a forty percent contraction in cane production must take place in Queensland in the late 1920s, either by voluntary or restrictive measures imposed upon the growers by government or economic forces.⁹⁶ Therefore, as discussed already, Australian Estates accepted the assignment of the Inkerman farmers at Jarvisfield and Rita Island so as to ensure they would be left with annual crops of around 50,000 tons when they were forced to take a loss.

Australian Estates' views on the restriction of production, although exaggerated, were correct for the Queensland sugar industry in April 1927 asked the Central Cane Prices Board to review all the lands assigned to the mills. This task was commenced shortly after the request; in the meantime no additional lands were assigned to the mills. On the Lower

⁹² N.Q.R., 4 August 1924, p. 11.

⁹³ N.Q.R., 10 August 1925, p. 95; N.Q.R., 28 September 1925, p. 61. See also N.Q.R., 22 March 1926, p. 10.

⁹⁴ N.Q.R., 8 August 1927, p. 67.

⁹⁵ For details on these endeavours see H.H.O., 30 September 1926; N.Q.R., 18 October 1926, p. 34; N.Q.R., 25 October 1926, p. 30; H.H.O., 4 November 1926; and N.Q.R., 2 May 1927, p. 21.

⁹⁶ The Manager, A.E.M. Co., to The Manager, Kalamia Mill, Ayr, 9 February 1926 (Loose letter, Kalamia Mill, Ayr).

Burdekin, the mill suppliers' committees were advised in July 1928 that all the assignments to the district's mills had been rescinded and the Central Cane Prices Board would begin a review of the farmers entitled to grow cane in the district in the near future.⁹⁷

Following the completion of the above review, the Central Cane Prices Board gazetted the areas on which farmers could cultivate cane and the mill to which they were assigned. Details of tonnages for the district's mills are shown in Table 9.9. A comparison of these details with the information on the number of suppliers to the Lower Burdekin mills in the 1920s, as assembled in Tables 9.5, 9.6 and 9.8, indicates that the Central Cane Prices Board did not reduce the number of farmers permitted to supply Pioneer, Kalamia and Inkerman Mills. It is also reasonable to assume that Invicta Mill was allocated a similar number of farmers to that which supplied it in 1928. However, despite being assigned 188 farmers, Invicta Mill was given only 7,200 acres of cane growing land; almost 6,000 acres less than Inkerman Mill. The Central Cane Prices Board decided not to assign Invicta Mill any growers who supplied Kalamia, Pioneer and Inkerman Mills, although the latter two factories were having difficulties in handling the crops grown for them in the late 1920s. It is not surprising, therefore, that Harry Burstall in late 1930 was again urging Invicta's suppliers to increase their acreages under cane.⁹⁸

**Table 9.9. Acreage, Number of Farmers and Peak Tonnages
Allocated to the Lower Burdekin Mills, 1930**

Mill	Acres Assigned	No. of Farmers	Peak Tonnage
Pioneer	10,400	147	21,391
Inkerman	13,198	223	24,207
Invicta	7,200 (3377)*	188 (111)*	11,736
Kalamia	11,724	157	26,053

* Refers to Ingham line suppliers.

Source: Constructed from details in Q.G.G., 134 (1930): 1146-47, 1428-31, 1468-69, 1961.

The list of farmers assigned to the Lower Burdekin mills following the 1928-29 review by the Central Cane Prices Board was also used to construct Figures 9.5 and 9.6, which show the mills' catchment areas in

⁹⁷ N.Q.R., 16 July 1928, p. 102.

⁹⁸ N.Q.R., 23 August 1930, p. 7.

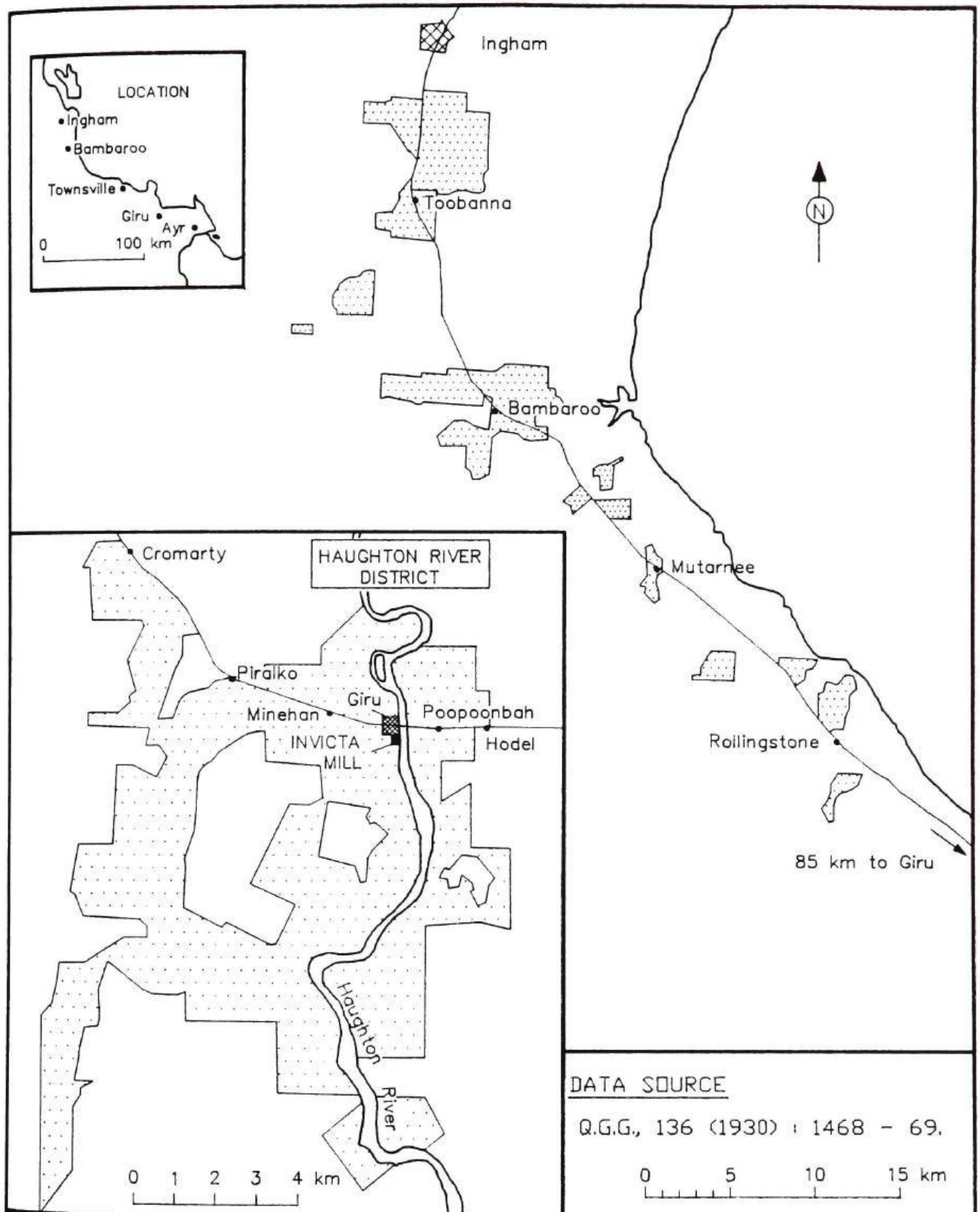


Figure 9.5 The Areas Assigned to Invicta Mill, 1930.

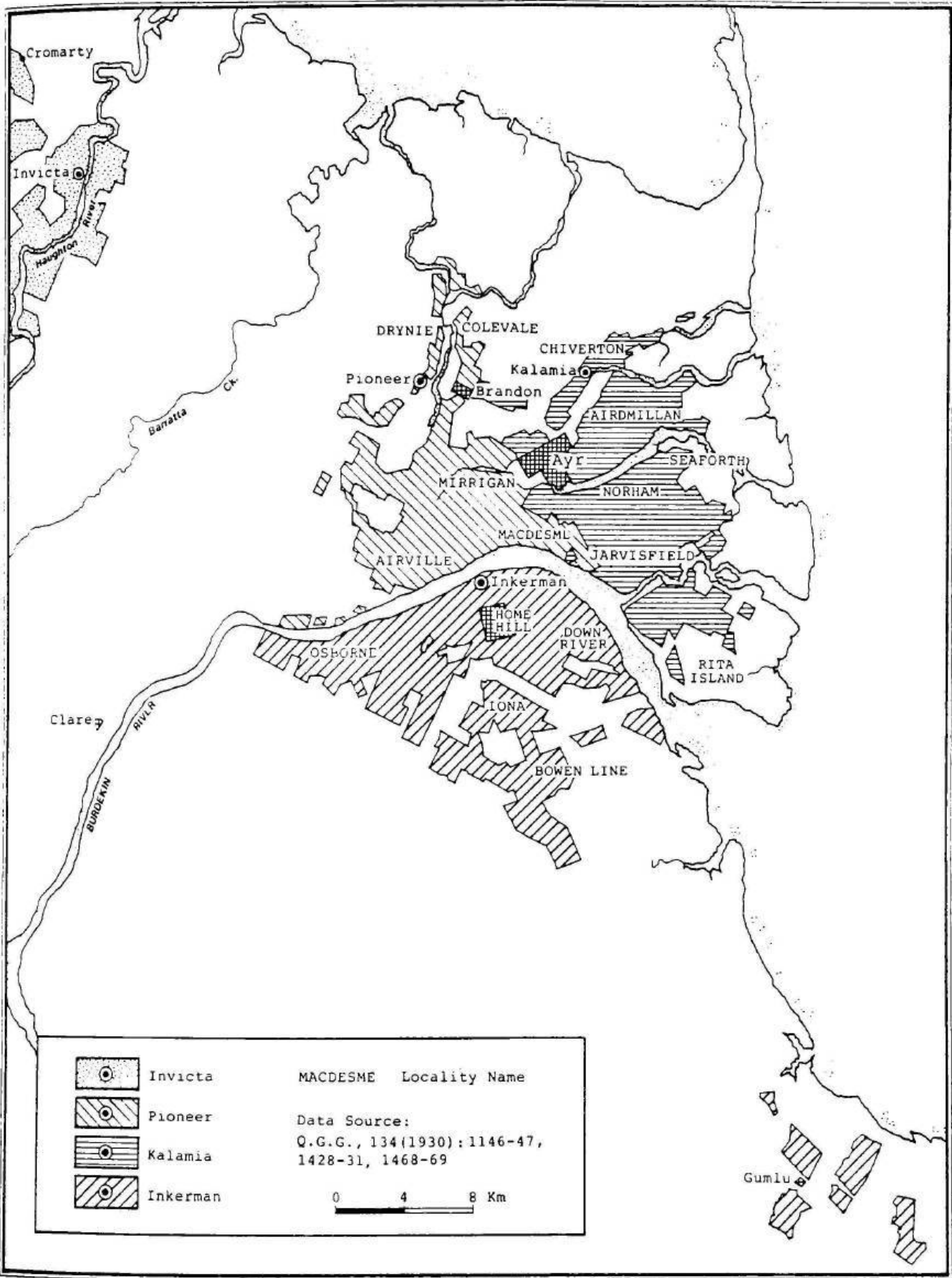


Figure 9.6 The Catchment Areas of Pioneer, Kalamia and Inkerman Mills, 1930

1930. It is interesting to note that cane growing had still not spread to the localities between the Haughton River district and Pioneer Mill and upstream of Airville. In fact, the localities from which Inkerman, Pioneer and Kalamia Mills drew their cane supplies in 1930 were very similar to 1921, with the exception that Inkerman Mill no longer received cane from the northern side of the Burdekin River. Moreover, this stability in the mills' catchment areas continued beyond the 1920s, for a comparison of Figures 9.6 and 9.7 shows that in 1982 the areas from which Pioneer, Inkerman and Kalamia Mill accepted cane was almost identical to that in 1930, with the exception that Inkerman Mill no longer obtained cane from Gumlu growers. Invicta's catchment area had changed, however, for as mentioned earlier the mill was assigned farmers at Clare, Dalbeg and Millaroo in 1964 in lieu of its Ingham line growers (see Figure 9.7).

Finally, despite the concern about overproduction, the Lower Burdekin farmers in the 1920s did not attempt to cultivate alternative crops (see Table 9.10). Indeed, as shown above, it appears the Lower Burdekin farmers tried to grow as much cane as possible. This is understandable, for many were indebted to the millers, as will be discussed shortly, so they probably needed large crops to reduce the amount they owed. Moreover, there was no profitable alternative to sugar-cane and no evidence could be found to suggest that the farmers were encouraged to grow anything but sugar-cane. As such it is not surprising that the Central Cane Prices Board had no difficulties in introducing restrictions on the area cultivated by the Lower Burdekin farmers in 1930. The farmers had no choice but to accept the decision. Regulation of their activities, with the exception of cultivation techniques and the actual yearly amount they cultivated on their assignment, was now complete. The growers, however, put their freedom to choose their farming methods to good use, as will be shown below.

9.6 Farms and Farmers

In 1919 the Cane Inspector at Kalamia Mill advised the Piddington Royal Commission that he believed the cultivation methods used by the Lower Burdekin farmers had not improved in recent years. Such sentiments were also expressed by an Inkerman farmer, who added that even if they could improve their cultivation techniques so as to increase the amount of cane per acre, they could not get the additional cane

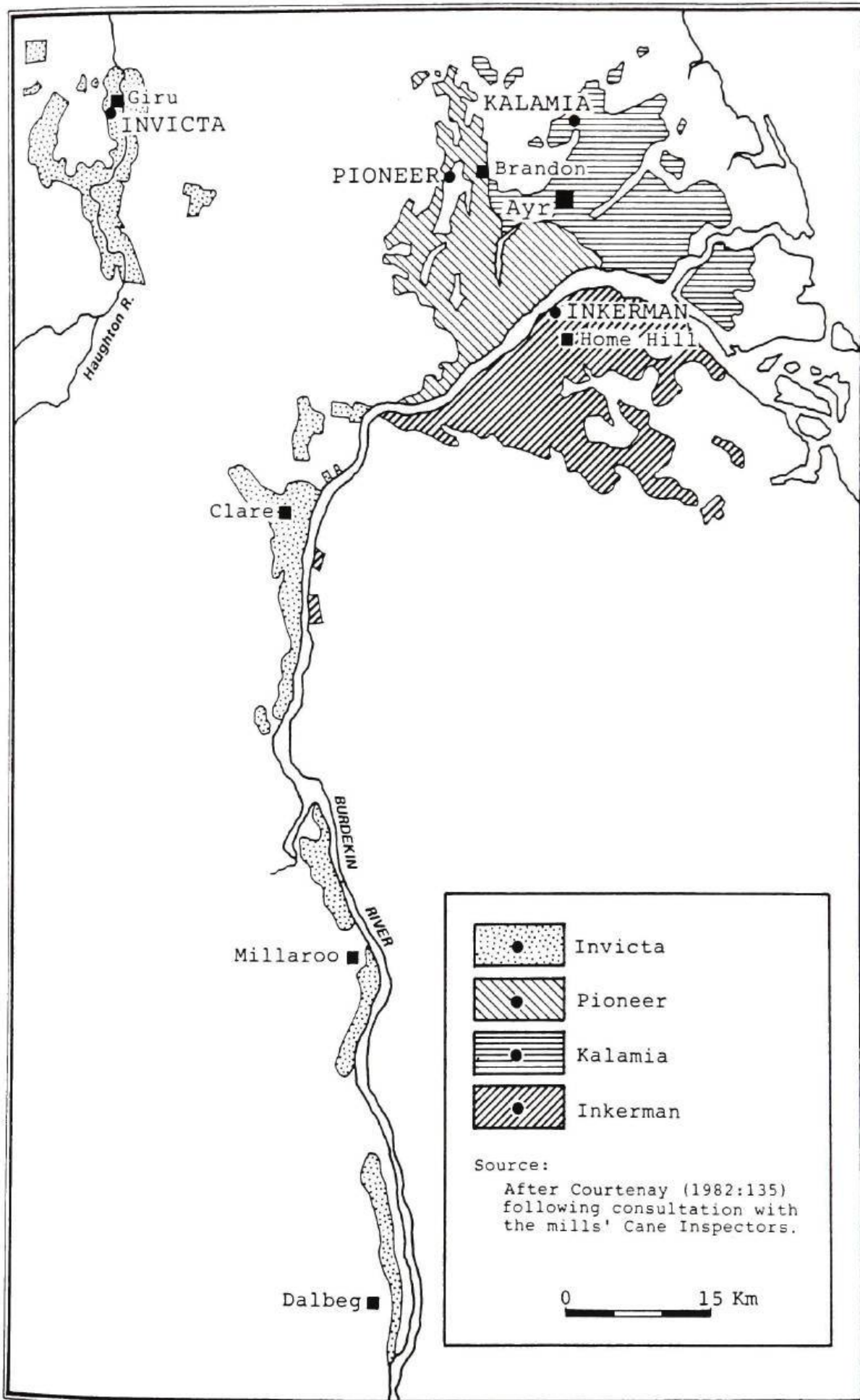


Figure 9.7 The Catchment Areas of the Lower Burdekin Mills, 1982.

Table 9.10. Crop Acreage on the Lower Burdekin, 1920-1930

	Total Acreage Under Crop	Crops		
		Sugar-Cane	Maize	Other
1920	20046	19477	208	361
1921	23343	22853	103	387
1922	24036	23754	26	256
1923	24209	23640	12	557
1924	25653	25334	0	319
1925	34372	33831	3	538
1926	30964	30468	16	480
1927	29190	28828	32	330
1928	32592	32259	2	331
1929	35617	35517	0	100
1930	35178	35073	0	105

Source: Assembled from figures in the Annual Reports of the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Stock, 1920-1931, in Q.P.P.

crushed.⁹⁹ However, cultivation techniques on the Lower Burdekin did improve in the 1920s. Manures, which had once been commonly used in the 1880s and 1890s,¹⁰⁰ but not applied extensively in the early twentieth century,¹⁰¹ once again were applied in increasing amounts in the 1920s.¹⁰² The use of tractors became more widespread, for by 1923 it was observed that there were thirty-six tractors on the Ayr side of the Burdekin River alone, whereas only eight or ten were used in the entire district in 1919.¹⁰³ Irrigation was also adopted by more farmers (see Table 9.11). This was partly a result of the expansion in the Inkerman Irrigation Scheme (see Table 9.12), but also because irrigation was now more affordable due to the plants being driven by windmills and tractors, instead of the costlier suction gas or steam driven pumps (cf. Plate 27 and Plate 28).¹⁰⁴

Despite the advances made above, sugar-cane cultivation on the Lower Burdekin (and throughout Queensland) in the 1920s was still labour-intensive. Farmers continued to cut plant cane by hand and manually place it into bags for loading onto the 'drop' planters. In addition, the seasons' crops were still manually harvested. Indeed, it was this factor which probably ensured the lack of increase in the average area harvested on the Lower Burdekin in the 1920s (see Table 9.13). Farmers may have been able to cultivate more with tractors, but it is reasonable to argue they were partly constrained in the areas they did cultivate because of the need to employ cane-cutting gangs to harvest their crops. Full mechanization of the industry did not occur until the

⁹⁹ Ev. P. Conlan; Ev. H. Christian, in A.B. Piddington et al., "Evidence of the Royal Commission on the Sugar Industry, 1920", pp. 371, 376.

¹⁰⁰ Q.V.P., 4 (1889): Ev. J. Mackenzie, p. 241, Q.5067; Ev. J. Drysdale, p. 243, Q.5142; T.D.B., 3 November 1887; Gen. Man., U.M.A. Co., Melbourne, to the Sec., A.E.M. Co., 6 October 1896, M.U.A., A.E.R., London Office Book No. 1, p. 109.

¹⁰¹ C.P.P., 4 (1913): Ev. J. Drysdale, p. 1426, Q.7478; A.S.J., 8 April 1915, p. 75; Ev. A. Dean; Ev. G. Julian; Ev. P. Conlan, in A.B. Piddington et al., "Evidence of the Royal Commission on the Sugar Industry, 1920", pp. 364, 368, 376.

¹⁰² N.Q.R., 15 January 1923, p. 16; H.H.O., 15 November 1923; N.Q.R., 4 August 1924, p. 88; N.Q.R., 5 January 1925, p. 82.

¹⁰³ N.Q.R., 15 January 1923, p. 6; Producer's Review, 10 June 1923, p. 34.

¹⁰⁴ E.G. Scriven, "Annual Report of the B.S.E.S., 1920-21", Q.P.P., 1 (1922): 1035; H. Easterby, "Annual Report of the B.S.E.S., 1923-24", Q.P.P., 2 (1925): 710-711.

Table 9.11. Irrigation Statistics for the Lower Burdekin,
1920-1930

Year	Lower Burdekin		Queensland	
	Number of Irrigators	Acreage Irrigated	Number of Irrigators	Acreage Irrigated
1920	183	6297 (64)	704	9803
1921	210	7915 (70)	754	11264
1922	281	10662 (74)	858	14314
1923	403	13883 (75)	1136	18417
1924	452	14841 (81)	1059	18235
1925	454	18433 (85)	1076	21669
1926	497	33338 (86)	1211	38644
1927	488	17151 (80)	1258	21411
1928	532	20093 (79)	1457	25344
1929	521	20090 (76)	1487	26282
1930	519	21017 (78)	1484	26947

Note: The figure in brackets refers to the area under irrigation on the Lower Burdekin as a percentage of the acreage under irrigation in Queensland.

Source: Compiled from figures published in the Annual Reports of the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Stock, 1920-1930, in Q.P.P.

Table 9.12. The Area Watered by the Inkerman Irrigation Scheme,
1922-1930

Year	Acres Watered	Year	Acres Watered
1922-23	2500	1926-27	4763
1923-24	4037	1927-28	5136
1924-25	4383	1928-29	5324
1925-26	4748	1929-30	5934

Source: Q.P.P., 2 (1927): 898; and N.Q.R., 15 November 1930, p. 77.

Table 9.13. Average Acreage Harvested by the Suppliers of Pioneer, Inkerman and Kalamia Mills, 1907-1930

Mill	1907	1910	1913	1916	1918	1921	1924	1927	1930
Pioneer	38±35	39±31	35±30	29±27	48±34	41±26	35±21	34±21	40±21
Kalamia	_*	-	-	-	-	46±31	34±25	-	-
Inkerman	-	-	-	13±11	-	-	-	-	39±16

* No figures available

Source: Calculated from figures in P.M.B., Register of Pioneer Mill Growers, 1907-1914; P.M.B. Register of Pioneer Mill Growers, 1914-1919; P.M.B., Register of Pioneer Mill Growers, 1920-1926; K.M.A., Lists of Individual Tonnage and Average C.C.S. for every Kalamia supplier, 1921-1926; and I.M.C., List of Inkerman Mill Suppliers, 1930.

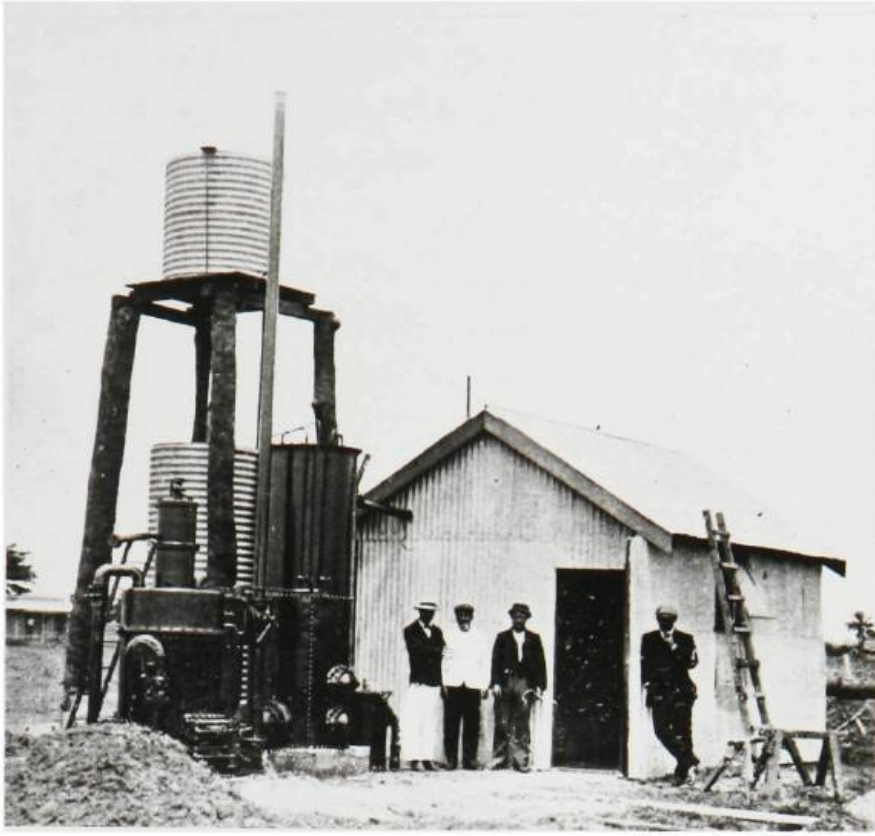


Plate 27 A farmer's irrigation pumping plant and engine house at Airdmillan, 1910.

Photo: A.S.J., 8 December 1910, p. 392.

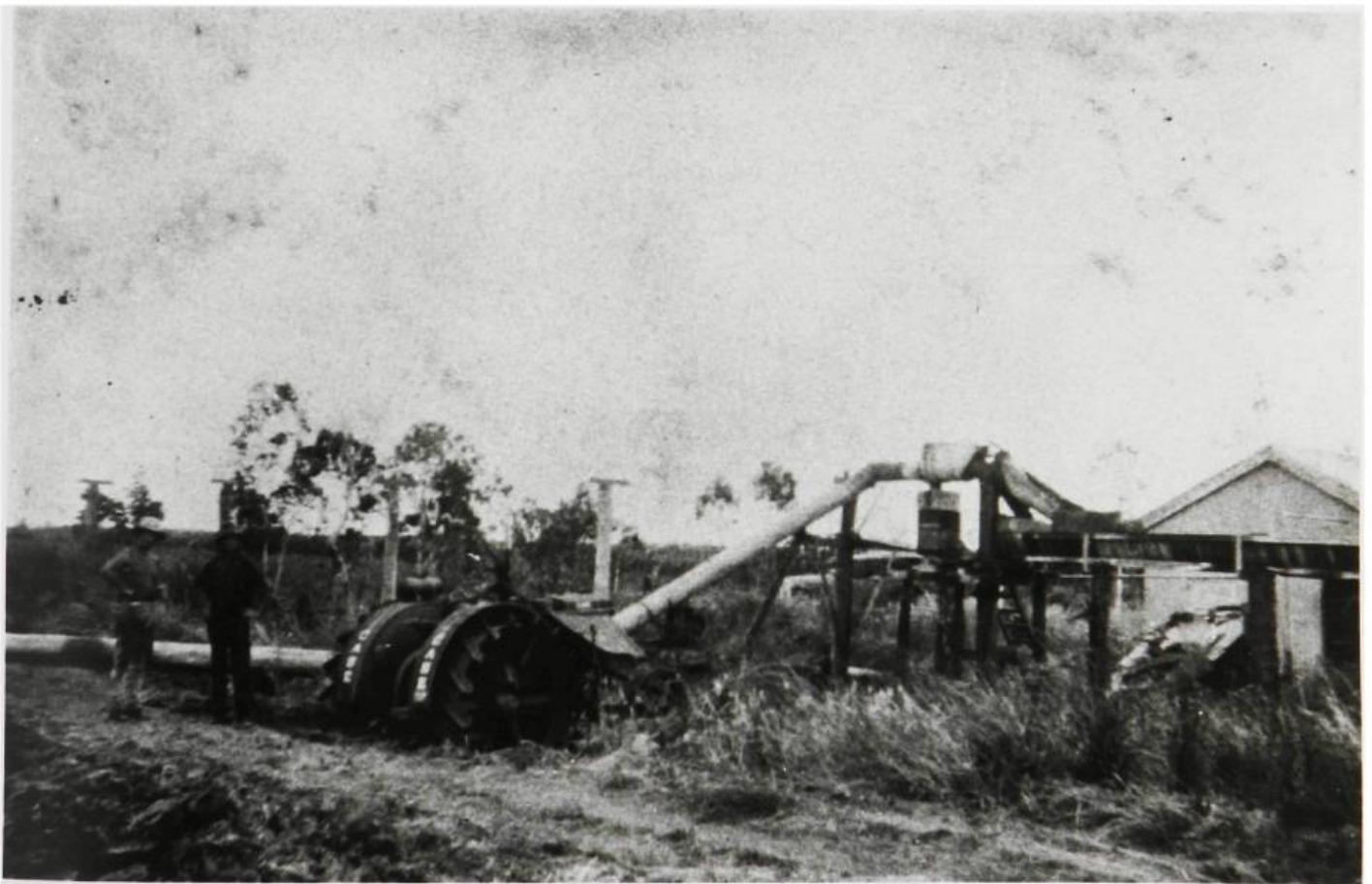


Plate 28 An irrigation plant being driven by a tractor, c. 1925.

Photo: Courtesy of Mr W. Wiseman, Redcliffe.

1960s.¹⁰⁵ Nevertheless, the advances in cultivation techniques and improved mill efficiency resulted in consistently better yields in the late 1920s than in the previous decades (see Figure 9.8).

Two problems marred the Lower Burdekin farmers' success in improving their yields in the 1920s: pests and debt. The former had not been a great concern on the Lower Burdekin before 1915, except for the occasional problems with grasshoppers and bandicoots.¹⁰⁶ In 1914, however, cane grubs appeared in the Haughton River district and by 1920 they had spread to the Ayr and Inkerman parts of the region.¹⁰⁷ To combat the grubs, Pest Destruction Boards were formed and levies on the farmers' crops collected to fund efforts to destroy the pests.¹⁰⁸ The presence of grubs forced the Lower Burdekin farmers, especially those at the Haughton River, to replace the Badilla variety of cane that was susceptible to the pest with Clarke's Seedling (HQ.426), which did not suffer as much from grub infestation.¹⁰⁹

Farmer debt, especially those who supplied Pioneer Mill, had been a problem since the early 1900s. During the 1920s, however, the debt to Pioneer Sugar Mills Ltd. rose from £117,512 in 1921 to a peak of £865,494 in 1927. It had been reduced to £279,275 by 1930.¹¹⁰ According to Connolly, practically the whole of this amount was borrowed by growers with John Drysdale's permission, without adequate security; merely an instruction to the Ayr Branch of the Union Bank to open an account for the prospective farmer, guaranteed by the Company, together with a

¹⁰⁵ For details on this subject see E.M. Driscoll, "Recent Developments in the Queensland Sugar-Cane Industry", *Geography*, 51 (1966): 147-149 and G.A. Willis, *The Harvesting and Transport of Sugar-Cane in Australia*, Department of Geography Monograph Series, No. 3 (Townsville: J.C.U., 1972).

¹⁰⁶ S.J.T.C., 2, 1 (1893): 38; *N.Q.H.*, 7 November 1898, p. 36; *N.Q.H.*, 6 March 1899, p. 36.

¹⁰⁷ *N.Q.R.*, 8 May 1916, p. 34; E.E. Scriven, "Annual Report of the B.S.E.S., 1920", *Q.P.P.*, 2 (1920): 170.

¹⁰⁸ *N.Q.R.*, 13 November 1922, p. 53; *N.Q.R.*, 20 November 1922, p. 48; *N.Q.R.*, 15 January 1923, p. 16; *N.Q.R.*, 11 June 1928, p. 12.

¹⁰⁹ For reference to changes in the cane varieties cultivated on the Lower Burdekin in the 1920s see K.M.A., "Annual Chemist's Reports on Mill Performance, 1920-1926", and Invicta Mill Managers' and Chemists' Reports, 1921-1928 in H.S.C.G., "Annual Reports of the H.S.C., 1921-1928".

¹¹⁰ J.C.U., PMR/IAL/6, pp. 52-53, 122-123; J.C.U., PMR/IA/7, pp. 83-84.

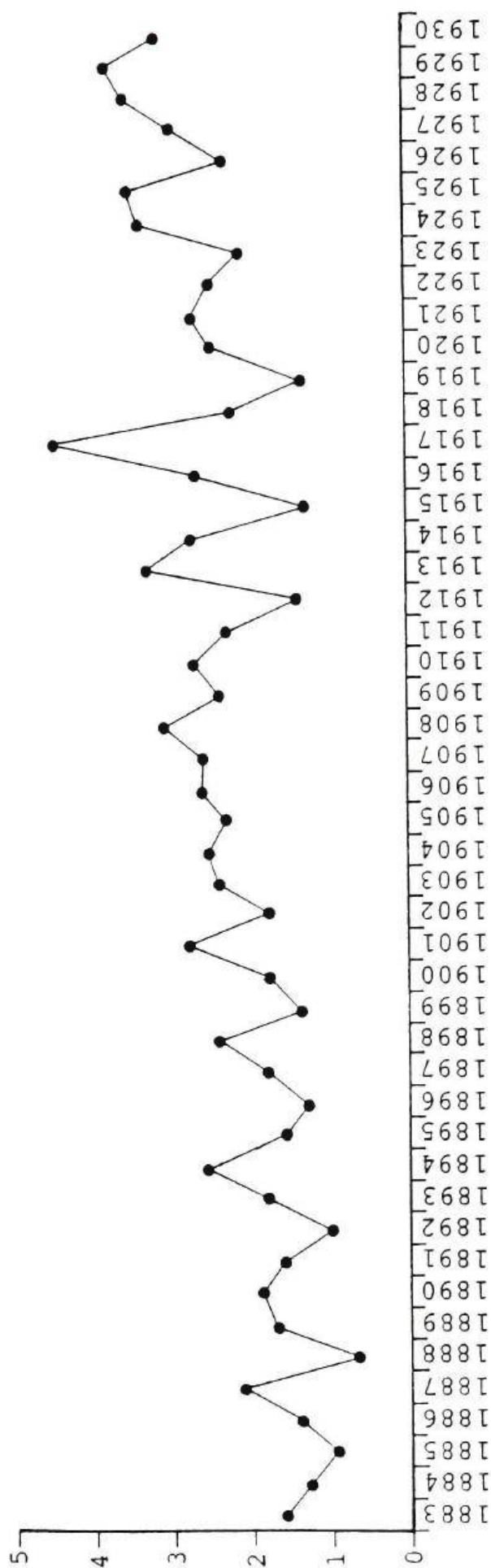


Figure 9.8 Tons of Sugar per Acre Harvested on the Lower Burdekin, 1883-1930.

Source: Assembled from figures in the Queensland Statistical Registers and Annual Reports of the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Stock, in Q.P.P.

record in Pioneer Sugar Mills Ltd.'s books.¹¹¹ In contrast, Australian Estates advised Kalamia Mill's Manager in 1926 that it was not prepared to advance funds to farmers at the same rate as John Drysdale, although it would agree to make limited funds available to such an amount as the farmers concerned could repay out of the proceeds of their ensuing crop and that circumstances generally warranted the granting of assistance to the growers.¹¹²

Why did the suppliers of Pioneer Sugar Mills Ltd. accumulate such large debts in the 1920s? Certainly, it appears that the farmers were not being forced into debt as a result of their income being less than their farming costs (see Table 9.14), although the figures provided are for the Mackay-Burdekin growers, not Burdekin growers alone. Nevertheless, it was most likely that similar costs were incurred in producing a crop of cane in both regions. It is also reasonable to suggest that the Lower Burdekin growers in the 1920s did not suffer the same hardships from industrial disputes and poor seasons as they did in the late 1910s. Indeed, the only major strike that affected the Lower Burdekin in the 1920s was the refusal of waterside workers to load ships in late 1925 and overall the seasons were favourable, with the exception of 1923 and 1926 (see Appendix 2). Therefore, it was most likely that the growers' debts became so enormous because they took advantage of the aging John Drysdale's peculiar generosity. Indeed, John Drysdale maintained an unvarying policy of financial support for growers to ensure the future supplies of cane for Pioneer Sugar Mills Ltd., although both its mills were fully supplied by 1925.¹¹³ Also, it appears there was a rapid turnover in the farmer population in the 1920s, for of the 451 suppliers of Pioneer, Inkerman and Kalamia Mills in 1921, only 155 or thirty-four percent continued to supply the mills in 1930.¹¹⁴ It is reasonable to assume that many of these new farmers, with limited amounts of capital, looked to John Drysdale to provide financial assistance so that they could operate their farms until they became established.

¹¹¹ Connolly, John Drysdale and the Burdekin, p. 185.

¹¹² The Gen. Man., A.E.M. Co., Melbourne, to The Manager, Kalamia Mill, Ayr, 1 March 1926 (Loose letter, Kalamia Mill, Ayr).

¹¹³ Connolly, John Drysdale and the Burdekin, p. 186.

¹¹⁴ Deduced from a comparison of the 1921 and 1930 lists of suppliers for Pioneer, Kalamia and Inkerman suppliers.

Table 9.14. Cane Growing Costs for the Burdekin-Mackay Districts

Year	Total Expenses (£/s/d)		Total Income (£/s/d)	
	per ton	per acre	per ton	per acre
1925	30/10	30/4/11	36/6	35/17/11
1926	40/1	28/13/5	45/11	32/17/5
1927	34/10	30/17/0	44/0	39/1/5
1928	34/9	28/19/4	42/2	35/3/7

Source: C.P.P., 3 (1929-31): 173.

Table 9.15. British and Foreign Farmers* in Queensland Sugar-Cane Growing Regions, 1929

Region	Foreigners		British		Total
	Number	%	Number	%	
Mossman	37	(25)	112	(75)	149
Cairns	152	(25)	457	(75)	609
Mourilyan	246	(41)	599	(59)	845
Herbert	214	(49)	224	(51)	438
Lower Burdekin	104	(16)	557	(84)	661
Proserpine/Mackay	209	(12)	1735	(88)	1994
Bundaberg/Gin Gin	45	(3)	1457	(97)	1502
Maryborough	68	(17)	322	(83)	390
Maroochy	13	(5)	268	(95)	281
Logan	7	(15)	41	(85)	48

* Includes Maltese, Hindus, Italians and Greeks. Excludes Germans.

Source: Assembled on the basis of information provided in N.Q.R., 19 October 1929, p. 79.

Finally, the turnover in farmers on the Lower Burdekin in the 1920s, however, did not result in an influx of Italian or other foreigners into the district to purchase the farms. Indeed, the number of alien farmers on the Lower Burdekin in 1929 was not high, when compared to the Mourilyan and Herbert River regions (see Table 9.15). Nevertheless, farmers on the Lower Burdekin met in April 1930 and formed a British Preference Committee. This organization aimed to encourage farmers to employ ninety percent British labour in the cultivation and harvesting of sugar cane and to have Britishers placed on sugar farms instead of foreigners.¹¹⁵ Its aims, however, were unfulfilled. Today, there is a thriving Italian and Greek community on the Lower Burdekin.

9.7 Conclusions

The system of proprietary central mills supplied by small farmers which existed on the Lower Burdekin in the 1910s was modified slightly in the 1920s by the operation of a co-operatively owned mill, Invicta. Its impact on the organization of the cane supply to the other three mills, however, was limited. With the exception of the Haughton River farmers who agreed to supply Invicta, none of the growers for Kalamia, Pioneer or Inkerman Mills were willing to be assigned to a mill in which they had a financial interest. Consequently, the Haughton Sugar Co. was forced to accept the assignment of Ingham line growers to Invicta Mill; an arrangement that did not entirely suit the Ingham line farmers.

During the early 1920s it became apparent that the farmers were producing crops that were greater than the capacities of the Lower Burdekin mills, with the exception of Invicta which received inadequate supplies of cane before 1925. Suppliers of Inkerman Mill tried to convince the Queensland Government to erect a central mill on the southern side of the Burdekin River to cater for this additional cane. This strategy met with little success, so the Inkerman growers on the southern side of the Burdekin River petitioned the Central Cane Prices Board to transfer the Inkerman farmers at Jarvisfield and Rita Island to Kalamia Mill. Australian Estates accepted these suppliers, for the capacity of Kalamia Mill was considerably expanded in the mid-1920s. Several Pioneer Mill suppliers at Macdesme were also allowed to send their cane to Kalamia Mill after 1928; they were eventually assigned to

¹¹⁵ Sec., British Preference Committee, to C. Drysdale, 28 April 1930, J.C.U., PMR/LB/50, n.pag., H.H.O., 1 May 1930, N.Q.R., 17 May 1930, p. 72.

Kalamia in 1930-31.

Was it inevitable that the above changes in the catchment areas for the Lower Burdekin should develop the way they did in the 1920s? In answering that question it initially needs to be pointed out that if the capacity of either Pioneer or Inkerman Mills had been upgraded, then there may have been no need for a transfer of growers between Pioneer Sugar Mills Ltd. and Australian Estates. Moreover, such a reassignment may not have been possible if Australian Estates had not expanded Kalamia's facilities. However, given that Kalamia could handle the extra cane, it is reasonable to argue that the transfer of growers would have taken place in the Macdesme-Jarvisfield-Rita Island localities, given the configuration of the district's tramlines. Indeed, it is highly unlikely that a reassignment of farmers could have happened in any other locality, without costly tramline alterations.

How did this system of proprietary and co-operative central mills fare on the Lower Burdekin in the 1920s? Unlike the late 1910s, the millers, with the exception of the Haughton Sugar Co., were not faced with losing money on their operations. Indeed, Australian Estates were able to embark on extensive alterations and Pioneer Sugar Mills Ltd. carried huge farmer debts. There were no more threats of mill closures or consideration given to selling the mills to the growers. On the other hand, it is reasonable to suggest that the small farmers were less successful in the 1920s. Indebtedness amongst the Pioneer and Inkerman suppliers was considerable, the co-operative mill they financed was troubled by serious financial difficulties and as mentioned in the previous chapter, problems were encountered in the running of the Inkerman Irrigation Scheme. More importantly, however, was the restriction placed upon the total area they could cultivate in 1930. All aspects of sugar cultivation, from the variety of cane grown to the time of harvest, had become regulated. Individual choice was now limited to cultivation techniques and the actual yearly amount they grew on their assignments.

Finally, the 1920s was a period when John Drysdale was relatively inactive, although his presence was still apparent. Under his policies, Pioneer Sugar Mills Ltd. continued to finance its farmers, guarantee funds for the Haughton Sugar Company and it relinquished control over growers at Jarvisfield, Rita Island and Macdesme. However, he was no longer the

dominant force in the district; his control over the industry had been broken in the late 1910s. Indeed, upon his death in 1928, the last vestiges of the old planter regime disappeared.

CHAPTER 10
THE LOWER BURDEKIN SUGAR INDUSTRY, 1880-1930:
RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

This study has been concerned with the growth and development of a regional sugar production system, with particular attention to the following seven issues: the changing spatial organization of the system; system structure; system regulation; the impact of governmental policies on the system; the influence of other individual decision makers; the significance of the resource base; and the role of technological change. The conclusions reached concerning each of the above themes will now be considered separately.

THE CHANGING SPATIAL ORGANIZATION OF THE SYSTEM

The Lower Burdekin sugar industry was established between 1880 and 1884 on the northern side of the Burdekin River on a number of estates within an eight kilometre radius of Ayr. After a short period of contraction in the mid-1880s when sugar growing was abandoned on some of the estates, the industry entered a prolonged period of expansion as the crop was cultivated throughout much of the region. This expansion occurred in four phases. First, in the 1890s sugar cane was cultivated close to the surviving sugar estates in localities such as Chiverton, Colevale, Labatt Lagoon, Airville and Dick's Bank and re-cultivated at Airdmillan, where the crop had ceased to be grown in the late 1880s. In the 1900s cane growing spread to the Haughton River district and localities south-east of Ayr (i.e. Macdesme, Norham), while there was a continued increase in the acreage under the crop in other areas throughout the district, particularly Airdmillan. During the 1910s the cultivation of sugar-cane advanced to additional localities south-east of Ayr (i.e. Jarvisfield, Lower Jarvisfield, Rita Island) and across to the southern side of the Burdekin River (see Figure 10.1). Finally, throughout the 1920s there was an expansion over increasingly larger areas in the localities where the crop had previously been cultivated.

The spread of cane growing throughout the region as described above was particularly ordered; certainly it was not random or haphazard. This occurred because of the strong locational influence of the mills and their tramline systems, for cane cultivation was dependent on the ability to get the harvested crop, which was quite bulky, quickly

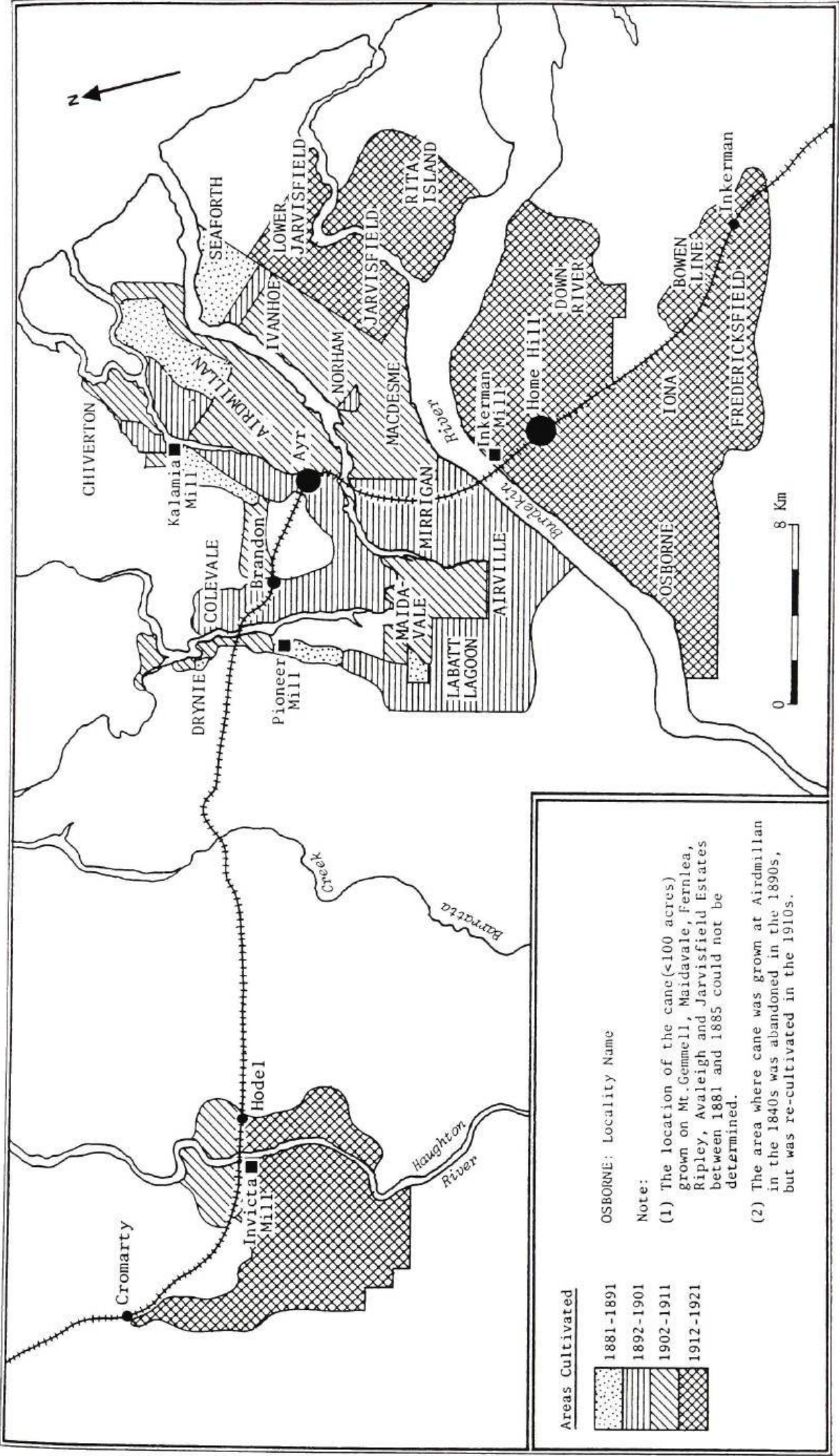


Figure 10.1 The spread of sugar-cane growing on the Lower Burdekin, 1881-1921.

to the factory to avoid deterioration in the sugar content of the cane. Therefore, as noted above, cane growing spread to areas closest to the mills and then further away as tramlines and railways tapped outer areas. Indeed, there was little likelihood of cane growing suddenly appearing, for example, at Fredericksfield or Iona on the southern side of the Burdekin River in the 1900s, unless a mill was established close by to crush the cane or the area was linked to a mill on the northern side of the Burdekin River. Cane growing, however, may have been commenced at Norham and Lower Jarvisfield in the 1890s, if the land had been subdivided for closer settlement, because of the closeness to Seaforth Mill. This study, therefore confirms Higman's observation that initially the "siting of mills largely determined the distribution of cane farming".¹

A second factor which influenced the spread of cane growing throughout the region was the provision of an adequate transport network. Unlike Camm's finding that a distance of 16-20 kilometres was about the maximum a wheat farmer could afford to locate from a railway line,² this investigation has shown that farmers located more than 3-5 kilometres away from a tramline were reluctant to cultivate cane or experienced difficulty in growing the crop because of the cost in bringing the cane by horse and wagon to a tramline siding. Therefore, the successful spread of cane growing to Airville and Mirrigan in the 1890s and Macdesme, Jarvisfield and Rita Island in the late 1900s and 1910s, for example, was a result of the building of a tramline into those localities in order to provide better access to transport facilities for the farmers, who were previously located some distance from a tramline siding. In contrast, it was the distance the Haughton River farmers had to bring their cane to the North Coast Railway and their inability to secure a tramline through the district that led to the erection of Invicta Mill at Giru.

The physical environment also had an important bearing on the distribution of cane growing throughout the Lower Burdekin. Cane was cultivated in the most fertile areas which fringed the Haughton River and were located within an eight kilometre radius of Ayr and ten kilometre southerly radius of Home Hill. Parts of the region (e.g. coastal fringe,

¹ Higman, "Sugar Plantations and Yeoman Farming in New South Wales", p. 708.

² Jack Camm, "Commercial Wheat Growing in Queensland 1870-1915", Australian Geographer, 13, 3 (1976): 177.

near Stokes Range, wetlands beside Kalamia Mill) were clearly unsuitable for agriculture and even today are not cultivated. There were, however, sections of the region (e.g. upstream on the Burdekin River near Clare, Dalbeg and Millaroo; between the Haughton River and Barratta Creek) which were perceived as not suitable for agriculture, although today parts of these localities are utilized for cane growing. Therefore, real physical constraints as well as perceived inadequacies of the resource base influenced where cane was grown on the Lower Burdekin before 1930.

Although much of the region was suitable for sugar cultivation, the spread of the crop throughout the district was also dependent on the land being obtainable and the availability of settlers willing to cultivate the crop. One of the reasons for cane growing being precluded from many of the large, freehold estates around Ayr before 1905 and from much of the southern side of the Burdekin River before 1910 was that the land had not been subdivided for closer settlement. However, it was not just the availability of agricultural land, but the need for settlers. As shown on several occasions in this study, some land openings were unsuccessful due to lack of demand. In contrast, the most successful period of land disposal and rapid expansion in cane growing in this study occurred between 1905 and 1915 and coincided with the decline in mining at Charters Towers and Ravenswood providing a pool of unemployed Europeans acclimatized to the tropics, who came to the Lower Burdekin seeking an alternative living as farmers.

Accompanying the change in the distribution of cane growing on the Lower Burdekin was another series of spatial patterns that were associated with changing allocation of supplies to the various mills (i.e. evolution of the mill catchment areas). In the 1880s most of the district's cane was grown on plantations and transported to the mills by horse and wagon. Catchment areas, therefore, were quite small - often no more than a kilometre in radius. From the 1890s onwards, however, cane cultivation spread to areas located increasingly further away from the mills, as the extension of tramlines made it easier for the small farmers to grow the crop. As such, the number of supplies to the mills enlarged, as did the areas from which they drew their cane, while most of the cane progressively was delivered to the mills by rail. By 1930 Pioneer, Kalamia and Inkerman Mills were receiving cane from 150-200 growers located mainly within a ten kilometre southerly radius of the factories. Invicta Mill was somewhat different, as it obtained cane by rail

from farmers located up to 100 kilometres from the mill as well as cane from local growers within a six kilometre radius of the mill.

Although there is a dearth of information about the development of mill catchment areas in Queensland before 1930, it would appear that the number of growers supplying the Lower Burdekin mills in the 1910s and 1920s was similar to other Queensland districts.³ It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that the catchment areas for the Lower Burdekin mills were similar in size to other mills in the state, although Invicta's was probably unique as it was spread over two districts, eighty kilometres apart. Certainly, the catchment areas of the Lower Burdekin mills were not as large as one in Louisiana that contained 762 cane planters and farmers within thirty-two kilometres of the factory.⁴

The evolution of the mill catchment areas also occurred in an ordered fashion - there was not a profusion of changing allocation patterns to the different mills. This occurred for three reasons. First, from the late 1890s onwards the Lower Burdekin planters-cum-millers paid the same price for their cane; a policy maintained by the Local Cane Prices Boards after 1919. As such a farmer would gain little from switching mills, other than perhaps access to John Drysdale's more generous financial support. Second, most suppliers sent their cane to the mills by tramline, so growers were almost forced to supply the factory that had a tramline closest to them, as it was unlikely they would endure the cost of carting their cane to an alternative mill by horse and wagon. Indeed, it was only the farmers nearest the tramlines of Kalamia and the Pioneer-Inkerman system at Mirrigan, Macdesme, Jarvisfield and Rita Island who could readily have had their cane crushed at a different mill. Third, from the early 1890s onwards the millers bound their growers with contracts to supply a particular mill for a set period. This arrangement was formalized after 1915 when farmers were assigned to a specific mill. Therefore, it was not easy for a farmer or group of farmers to legally cease supplying one mill for another.

With the above factors in mind, it is easy to appreciate that by 1920 there were "core" localities from which a mill received its cane supply.

³ Kerr, Southern Sugar Saga, p. 175; Manning, In their own hands, p. 222.

⁴ Mark Schmitz, "The Transformation of the Southern Cane Sugar Sector, 1860-1930", Agricultural History, 53 (1979): 277.

Indeed, it was only at the extremities of a catchment area that subsequent changes occurred; for example, the Haughton River growers ceased supplying Pioneer Mill after 1920 and farmers at Jarvisfield and Rita Island were reassigned to Kalamia Mill in 1926. Moreover, the catchment areas of Pioneer, Kalamia and Inkerman Mills have remained virtually unchanged since 1930. Invicta Mill, however, has received a more optimum allocation of suppliers, for it was assigned farmers in the Clare-Dalbeg-Millaroo areas in lieu of its distant Ingham line growers.

The development of the catchment areas of the Lower Burdekin mills reflected the skilful manoeuvrings of John Drysdale. It was quite conceivable that the small farmers at Airville and Mirrigan could have succeeded in turning Kalamia into the district's co-operative mill, thereby limiting the area from which Pioneer drew its cane. John Drysdale, however, with local knowledge, was in a better position to judge when to secure a crucial lease, extend a tramline or expand milling capacity than Australian Estates, controlled from London. Accordingly, the catchment area for Pioneer Mill incorporated the Mirrigan and Airville localities by the late 1890s and Macdesme, Jarvisfield and Rita Island areas by the early 1910s. Australian Estates could have secured suppliers in those localities if it had been more aware of local developments. Later in the mid-1920s, however, Australian Estates' willingness to expand its milling capacity instead of Pioneer Sugar Mills Ltd. led to the latter losing suppliers in areas which it once dominated.

Lastly, the investigation of this topic has shown that a mill of a given crushing capacity usually required a specific number of growers so that it was optimally supplied. For example, the technologically advanced Inkerman Mill when established required cane from the northern side of the Burdekin River in order to utilize its full capacity. It was only in the mid-1920s, after the farmers on the southern side of the Burdekin River had become established, that the growers at Jarvisfield and Rita Island were reassigned to Kalamia. Similarly, Invicta Mill with around fifty suppliers in the early 1920s was undersupplied and suffered from the same problem that it had encountered when operating in Bundaberg.⁵ As such, the Directors of the Haughton Sugar Co. Ltd. were forced to accept cane from the distant Ingham line growers to provide an adequate catchment area.

⁵ Manning, In their own hands, p. 164.

System Structure

This study has shown that a neoplantation production system dependent mainly on indentured Melanesians was established on the Lower Burdekin in the early 1880s. This system lasted until 1905, although by then it embraced only three units (i.e. Pioneer, Kalamia, and Seaforth estates) tied to two mills. It was replaced by proprietary central mills supplied by small family farms worked by 'whites' in the late 1900s. This arrangement was modified slightly by the erection of a cooperatively owned central mill in 1920.

Within the above sequence of changes, the neoplantation system lasted and was dominant for twenty-five years. Its dominance on the Lower Burdekin appears to be longer than on other Queensland cane growing regions (e.g. Bundaberg, Cairns, Mackay), where the neoplantations were replaced by cooperative and proprietary central mills as early as the late 1880s. The persistence of the neoplantation system of production on the Lower Burdekin it has been argued was dependent upon John Drysdale's careful management of the district's sugar estates, his opposition to the schemes in the 1890s to establish a cooperative mill in the district and the ability of Drysdale Bros. and Australian Estates to obtain cheap, indentured labour.

Although the neoplantation system was dominant for much longer on the Lower Burdekin compared to most other Queensland cane growing regions, it has been argued that cooperative and proprietary central mills supplied by small farms worked by 'whites' would emerge. This certainty was a result of the broader socio-political forces that were in operation, such as the White Australia policy, opposition from the trade unions to indentured workers and the increasing difficulty in securing indentured Melanesians. Moreover, despite the poor performance of many of the district's small farmers requiring Pioneer Sugar Mills Ltd. to carry large grower debts, there was no attempt on the Lower Burdekin to revert to an earlier production system once the above transformation had occurred, nor any move by the millers to replace the family farmer with hired managers and workforces (i.e. corporate farming).⁶

⁶ For a discussion on agribusiness and corporate farming see Lawrence, Capitalism and the Countryside. The Rural Crisis in Australia, pp. 131-134.

There are three implications of the above findings. First, they certainly confirm that regional variations did exist during transformation that occurred in the capitalist sugar economy of Queensland at the turn of the century. This point has been overlooked in the general literature on the history of the colony's sugar industry, with the exception of Shlomowitz, although he offered no explanation for its occurrence.⁷

Second, the study has shown that within the development of the Lower Burdekin industry, two production systems - sharecropping and central factories - did not emerge. In the case of the former this is not surprising. Sharecropping was used mainly when the planters were desperately short of labour or funds to pay wages. Neither developments confronted the Lower Burdekin planters. The absence of sharecropping on the Lower Burdekin it appears was not atypical, for a review of the secondary sources on the history of the Queensland sugar industry could find no mention of it being practised. A closer examination of primary material may, however, indicate its existence in isolated instances. A central factory, on the other hand, may have emerged on the Lower Burdekin in the 1890s, for as shown in Chapter 6.6 it was suggested that Pioneer Mill could have crushed the cane from the district's other two plantations. Such an arrangement never eventuated, most likely because of John Drysdale's opposition to the proposal. The absence of a central factory on the Lower Burdekin it appears was again not atypical, for the existence of such a production system is not recorded in the existing secondary sources on the history of the Queensland sugar industry.

Third, the above results confirm the conclusions reached in the literature that adjustments had to be made to the production unit when cheap labour was no longer available. Despite John Drysdale's abilities, he was not able to successfully solve the labour question to ensure plantation agriculture could continue.

System Regulation

This study has shown that the Lower Burdekin sugar industry in the early 1880s was subjected to a few regulations mainly covering the employment of Melanesians, yet by 1930 when regulations were introduced limiting the sugar output of the mills and the area on which a farmer

⁷ Shlomowitz, "The Search for Institutional Equilibrium in Queensland's Sugar Industry", p. 109.

could cultivate cane, most aspects of the industry's operations ranging from the time of harvest to the price the millers received for their raw sugar was governed by legislation. The development of such a tightly regulated system, it has been argued, was inevitable because of two factors. First, as sugar-cane must be milled soon after it is harvested and the efficiency of a mill is dependent upon a regular flow of cane, there needed to be tight control over the crop's production. This was obtainable under the authoritarianism of the plantation system, but the emergence of small suppliers posed the millers with organizational problems (e.g. farmers may switch mills, grow inappropriate cane, try to establish their own mills) which were only overcome by contracts.

Second, after 1901 the Queensland sugar industry assumed greater national importance because it contributed to the European settlement of the underpopulated tropics. Therefore, the industry had to be encouraged to employ 'whites' only and protected so that its farmers and millers could prosper, but within a controlled context to avoid overproduction. As such, Commonwealth regulations concerning Australia's sugar industry were initially directed towards modifying the industry's labour supply. Later legislation then sought to control output, by regulating the market and limiting production.

Two significant comments can be made about the above findings. First, although the system of production that had emerged on the Lower Burdekin by 1930 was subjected to more controls than other rural industries in Queensland, it was not entirely unique. During the 1920s controlled marketing in Queensland was applied to such products as wheat, maize, barley, cotton, butter, cheese and fruit.⁸ Moreover, the limited choice allowed to millers and farmers in their operations by 1930 remains a feature of the Lower Burdekin sugar industry in the 1980s. Indeed, the very stringent control that was established over virtually all aspects of sugar production in Queensland by the late 1920s was seen to contribute to the problems recently experienced by the state's sugar growers.⁹

⁸ For an account of these developments see Shogren, "Agriculture 1915-1929", pp. 186-191.

⁹ Russell Savage (Chairman), Report of the Sugar Industry Working Party (n.p.: n.p., 1985), pp. 18-21.

Second, this study has shown that the independence and autonomy of the small farmers was something of a myth. Indeed, from the early 1890s a wide array of the activities associated with the cultivation and harvesting of sugar-cane were regulated by the millers' contracts. Also, many of the farmers were dependent on the millers for credit and technical assistance. It would be wrong, however, to consider the district's farmers as passive. In the 1900s they refused attempts by John Drysdale to limit the areas they cultivated and on several occasions they pressured the millers into upgrading the capacities of their factories. Moreover, they were not entirely alone in their lack of choice. Drysdale Bros. and Australian Estates too were increasingly limited in their operations, especially after 1910.

The Influence of Governmental Policies

In this study, government policy in three areas had an impact on the development of the Lower Burdekin sugar industry. First the control exercised by successive Queensland Governments over access to land meant they managed one of the inputs that influenced the structure of the industry and the spread of cane growing throughout the region. Second, Queensland Governments seeking to encourage closer settlement provided some of the infrastructure needed for regional development (e.g. railways, irrigation schemes). Third, through policies designed to support and protect the sugar industry, the Commonwealth and Queensland Governments attempted to provide an economic milieu conducive to cane cultivation by small family farms worked by 'whites'. Throughout its development, however, the Lower Burdekin sugar industry also received inputs from non-government sources such as the millers and small farmers, who provided capital and labour. Therefore, the findings from this study suggest that in the shaping of regional sugar production systems, governments had a significant role, but it was facilitative rather than critically decisive.

The Influence of Other Individual Decision-Makers

The importance of individuals or individual organizations is often overlooked in the more general historical writings. The selection of a small area for detailed investigation, however, allowed the impact of individual decision makers to be studied in more depth, especially as they often had critically decisive roles in shaping the development of the region.

In this study a number of individual decision makers such as John Drysdale, local organizations (e.g. I.F.G.A., H.R.F.A.) and other non-local organizations with strong local involvement (e.g. Australian Estates, N.A.P.C., A.N.Z.M. Co.) influenced the evolution of the Lower Burdekin sugar industry. Of course it is reasonable to suggest that the most important was John Drysdale who held the positions of Managing Director of Drysdale Bros. operations on the Lower Burdekin and General Manager of Australian Estates' Lower Burdekin sugar estates between 1898 and 1914.

What is the significance of the above findings? First, they support May's observation that any understanding of the development of regional spatial patterns must take into account parochial factors such as personalities and peculiarities of individuals. On the Lower Burdekin any appreciation of the growth of the sugar industry before 1915 must take into account the crucial decisions made by John Drysdale in regard to tramline erection, mill capacity, financial support for farmers and leasing of lands. Later developments such as the erection of Invicta Mill and the reassignment of Inkerman farmers to Kalamia Mill reflect, however, the increasing importance of the district's farmer groups, who acted as a counter to John Drysdale.

Second, this investigation highlights how a skilful local entrepreneur could outmanoeuvre a capitalist firm controlled from London and also the district's farmers for two decades. Indeed, it was only following his resignation from the supervisory position at Kalamia Estate in 1914 and government intervention via the introduction of the Regulation of Sugar-Cane Prices Act of 1915 that John Drysdale's ability to dictate the way the industry progressed was reduced, yet remained not unimportant.

The Significance of the Resource Base

The influence of the unsuitability of parts of the region for agriculture on the distribution of cane growing on the Lower Burdekin has been referred to earlier. Low and erratic yearly rainfall was also another physical feature which influenced the development of the region's sugar industry, although its impact was on the amount of cane that could be cultivated and yields and not on where the crop could be grown in the district.

To successfully grow sugar-cane in a region not ideally climatically suited to its cultivation, the Lower Burdekin planters-cum-millers and small farmers resorted to irrigation. Methods were initially crude, but they ensured the industry survived. Advances in irrigation technology, especially in making its usage cheaper, and the building of the Inkerman Irrigation Scheme contributed greatly to the expansion in the acreage under cane and improved yields in the 1920s. This extensive reliance on irrigation, which resulted in upwards of eighty per cent of Queensland's irrigated acreage being on the Lower Burdekin between 1890 and 1930, is still an important feature of the region's sugar industry today.

Besides irrigation the only other significant efforts the Lower Burdekin settlers made to improve the resource base was the application of manures. Drainage of wetlands, filling in of swamps and lagoons and large-scale levelling of paddocks did not occur until the introduction of larger, earth moving machinery in the late 1950s.

The Role of Technological Change

During this study major technological advances occurred in two phases: first, during the early 1890s when there was an infusion of new practices and machinery (e.g. maceration, double crushing, Henry Braby's megass drying contrivance) into the mills; and second, after 1915 when there was a limited introduction of machinery into the field (e.g. tractors, 'drop' planters).

Three comments can be made about the above findings. First, the adoption of new techniques and machinery by the millers in the early 1890s set the scene for the increased output between 1895 and 1915 as new areas were brought under cultivation to meet the expanded capacities

of the refurbished sugar factories. Mechanization of the cultivation practices, however, probably only had minimal impact on the shaping of the Lower Burdekin between 1915 and 1930.

Second, the use of new technology by the Lower Burdekin farmers and millers was not unique. It was quite a common occurrence in other sugar growing regions in Queensland and overseas between 1880 and 1930. However, the Lower Burdekin farmers and millers were not leaders in developing technological initiatives. Advances in milling and farming were achieved by importing machinery and established practices.

Third, the impetus to introduce machinery and new processes for the millers occurred as a result of the need to reduce the cost of manufacture per ton of sugar, due initially to the fall in sugar prices, but later because of the increased price they had to pay the farmers for their cane. Some of the new technology was aimed at specifically reducing labour costs (e.g. Braby's megass drying contrivance, rakes), while other advances sought to improve the extractive capabilities of the mill (e.g. maceration, double crushing, wider crushing rollers). For the farmers it was the loss of their cheap Melanesian workers which forced them to mechanize, in order to save on the employment of the more expensive European labour. As such, not only did the loss of cheap labour lead to a change in the production unit, but it initiated a movement towards greater mechanization.

Therefore, the first fifty years in the development of the Lower Burdekin sugar industry can be summarized as being a period of the transformation from "plantation to small farm". This volume is, of course, not the conclusion of the story, but by the late 1920s the industry, after completing its initial phase of growth and change, was entering a period of stability. Nevertheless, there have been important developments since 1930. Mechanization of harvesting and bulk handling of the mills' raw sugar output has occurred, southern Europeans have penetrated the ranks of the previously Anglo-Saxon mill and field workers and farmers, and all the district's mills are now controlled by the C.S.R. Ltd. (previously C.S.R. Co.). Also, production has substantially increased due to progressively more advanced irrigation techniques.¹⁰ Indeed, the

¹⁰ P.P. Courtenay, "Agricultural Geography", in Geographical Studies of the Townsville Area, Ed. D. Hopley. Department of Geography Monograph Series, No. 2 (Townsville: James Cook Uni. of North

raw sugar output from the four Lower Burdekin mills exceeded 580,000 tons in 1987. Moreover, in terms of output (although not in terms of the total assigned area), the Lower Burdekin is now more important than the other three North Queensland regional sub-systems (see Table 10.1). In fact, according to Courtenay, yields of cane in tonnes per hectare and of made sugar per hectare of cane are the highest in Australia and, for a one year crop, probably the highest in the world.¹¹ Despite the importance of these later changes, they are, however, overshadowed by the ramifications of the changes that occurred before 1930.

Table 10.1. Queensland Raw Sugar Production by Region, 1987

Region	Assigned Area (ha)	Number of Suppliers	Production (tonnes of 94 n.t. sugar)
Cairns/Mossman	43455	746	378761
Mourilyan/South Johnstone	54479	921	486112
Lower Herbert	41507	628	393290
Lower Burdekin	42622	685	583086
Mackay	108727	1539	863387
Bundaberg	46873	851	396742
Childers/Maryborough	23756	366	158431
Brisbane	12213	235	114102

Source: Australian Sugar Yearbook, 1988

Finally, the special contributions of this investigation of the changes in the Lower Burdekin sugar industry before 1930 are two-fold. First, this study has tried to integrate the forces of social change occurring in Queensland and Australia with those specific local circumstances to show how they in combination shaped the evolution of a regional sugar production system. Second, this study has provided details on some of the issues treated too briefly in the general histories, such as the timing and reasons for the transformation from one production system to another, the development of the mill's catchment areas and the role of the planters-cum-millers in influencing the regulation of the system and

Queensland, 1978), pp. 96-99.

¹¹ Courtenay, "Agricultural Geography", p. 99.

supporting their small suppliers. Together these findings will contribute to the greater understanding of the development of the Queensland sugar industry before 1930. As such, this investigation supports Meinig's assertion that history and geography must be written "not from the top down, but from the bottom up".

APPENDIX ONE

Data Collection Sheet for Land Opening Details

LAN _____ DF _____

PARISH _____ PORTION NO. _____

NAME OF SELECTOR _____

OCCUPATION _____

RESIDENCE _____

YEAR OF OPENING _____ YEAR OF FREEHOLD TITLE _____

YEAR OF INSPECTION _____ WAS SUGAR-CANE GROWING? _____

SUBSEQUENT OWNERS/SUBDIVISIONS

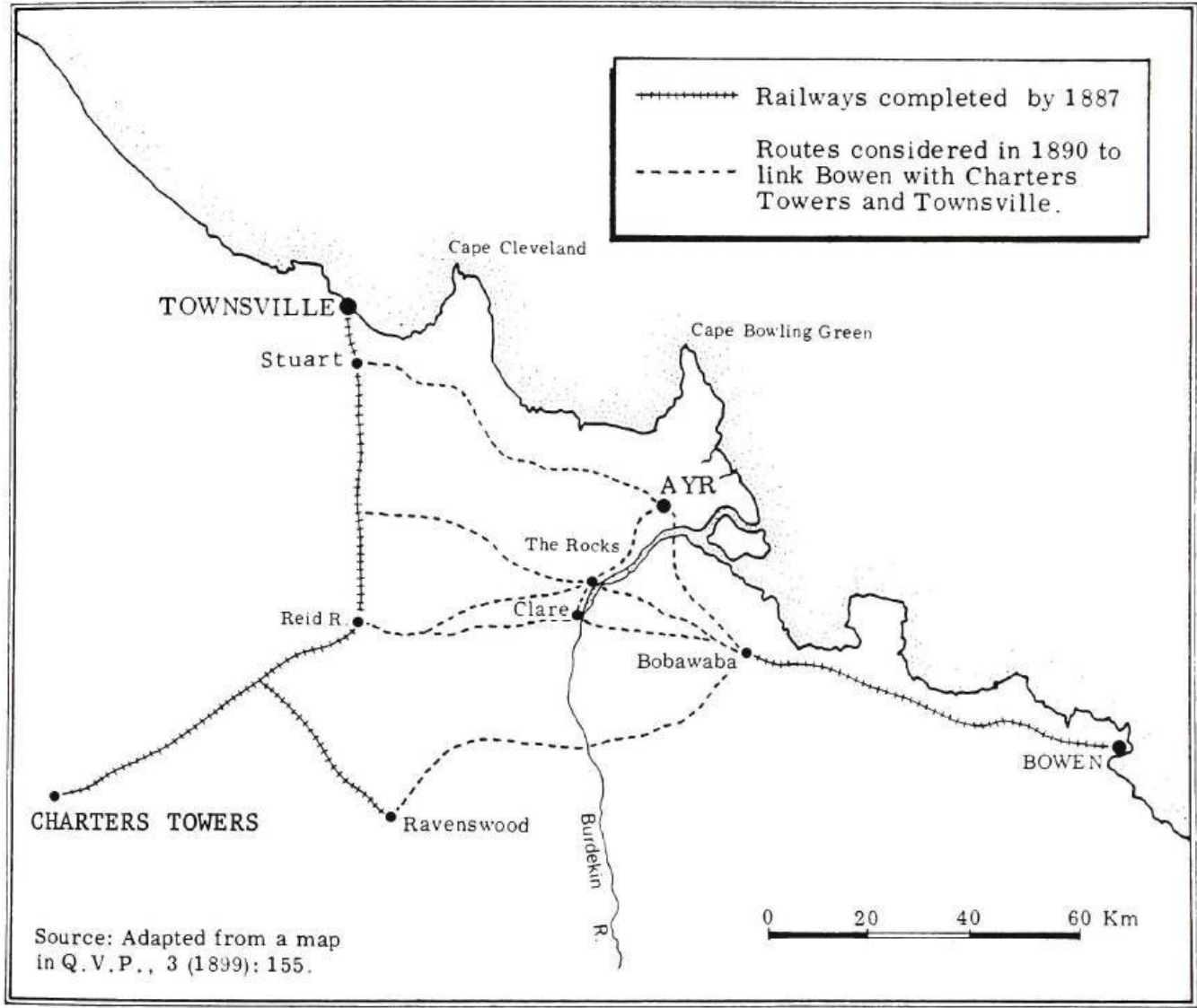
APPENDIX TWOThe Ayr to Stuart Tramway: A Brief History

From the outset of operations the Lower Burdekin mill owners were forced to send their sugar to Townsville aboard small coastal steamers. The sugar then had to be reloaded onto larger vessels for shipment to the southern capitals. Agitation by the Lower Burdekin planters in the early 1880s for a rail link with either Bowen or Townsville to end this double handling had led to the McIlwraith Government deciding to link Charters Towers to Ayr by the building of a line to Reid River via Clare. This line with a branch track to Ayr was to accomplish several objectives. The population of Charters Towers would have the advantage of obtaining fresh fruit, vegetables and dairy products from the small farmers working the Burdekin delta lands. Sugar from the Burdekin mills would be railed to Bowen instead of having to be shipped to Townsville and the meat-freezing works on Poole Island, Bowen, would get direct supplies of sheep and cattle from the western pastoral runs.¹

By November 1883 trial surveys, plans and other specifications for the railways had been presented to the government. However, the McIlwraith Government was defeated before it could pass the necessary legislation to provide the funds for the line. Three years then passed before the Griffith Ministry in 1886 allocated £150,000 for the Haughton Gap Line, as it became known.

Construction began on the railway but progress was slow. Indeed, in October 1889 nine members of the Legislative Assembly approached the Minister of Railways to seek reasons as to why the line still only stretched as far as Bobawaba, twenty-five miles north of Bowen. The Minister, as a result of this deputation, appointed three Commissioners to examine ways to complete the railway. The report from their investigations recommended that the Haughton Gap Line should not be completed following the route to Reid River via Clare, but should be diverted along the coast. This diversion would eliminate the need to construct a branch line to Ayr and earnings on the coastal route would probably be higher than those on other routes, although its initial construction cost would be greater because of the need to erect more

¹ Donnelly, The Port of Townsville, p. 31.



Railway routes considered in 1890 to link Bowen with Charters Towers and Townsville.

bridges.² However, the 1890 recommendations concerning the Haughton Gap Line were not implemented and the twenty-five miles of rusting line from Bowen to Bobawaba continued to lead nowhere throughout the 1890s, despite repeated calls for its completion from the Bowen and Lower Burdekin residents.³

The delay by the Crown in finishing the Haughton Gap Line eventually led to the formation in mid-1897 of the Townsville to Ayr Railway Committee.⁴ The main supporters of this Committee were the three local authorities which would gain from a railway, namely the Townsville Municipal Council, the Thuringowa Divisional Board and the Ayr Divisional Board. Indeed, by October 1897 the three organizations had undertaken to provide the funds required by the government as a guarantee before a loan could be advanced for the building of the railway.⁵ However, eighteen months passed before the three local authorities asked the Crown to allow them to form a Joint Local Authority which would construct and maintain a tramline from Ayr to Stuart. Approval was given to such a scheme and the Ayr Tramway Joint Board was duly constituted in September 1899.⁶

The plan to build the tramway between Ayr and Stuart, however, was not supported by the Railways Department. Concern was expressed about the viability of the project because of a lack of a guarantee that the Lower Burdekin's produce would be sent over the line to Townsville.⁷ However, in late January 1900 the Railways Department was notified that an agreement had been reached between the Ayr Tramway Board and the owners of the two Lower Burdekin sugar mills whereby all their raw

² John Mathieson (Chairman), "Report on the Junction of the Bowen Line with Northern Railway", Q.V.P., 3 (1890): 461-463.

³ N.Q.H., 10 August 1892, p. 25; N.Q.H., 25 April 1894, p. 19; P.D.T., 13 October 1894; P.D.T., 30 May 1896; N.Q.H., 7 September 1898, p. 7; Brisbane Courier, 30 August 1898.

⁴ N.Q.H., 28 July 1897, p. 28.

⁵ N.Q.H., 18 October 1897, p. 42.

⁶ Q.G.G., 118 (1897): 647. For copies of all the correspondence concerning the formation of the Ayr Tramway Joint Board see Q.V.P., 3 (1899): 147-150.

⁷ Commissioner of Railways, Brisbane, to the Sec., Ayr Tramway Board, Townsville, 17 January 1900, Q.S.A., A/9122, Out-letter 1024 of 1900.

sugar output would be sent via the tramway to Townsville.⁸

Tenders to construct the tramway were called in late December 1900. The contractor was to provide all labour and material with the exception of rails and fastenings. In April 1900 two tenders were opened, the lower amounting to just over £64,000. Members of the Board agreed this tender was too high and referred the matter to Peter Minehan, a consulting engineer, for examination and report. Minehan replied with a written estimate in which he set down the total cost of the line - including the rails and fasteners - at £77,600. In view of the great disparity it was agreed to ask the Queensland Government for permission for the Board to construct the line itself. The Treasurer agreed. Subsequently, following assurances from Minehan that he would complete the work in twelve months for £78,000, the Ayr Tramway Board approached the government for a loan. The Crown acceded to the Board's request and lent the full amount needed to build the tramway.⁹

Work commenced on the Ayr tramway in mid-1900 and was completed ten months later in late March 1901 - two months within the schedule which Minehan had set himself. Its opening in April 1901 was particularly important to the Lower Burdekin sugar mills. Drysdale Bros. no longer had to cart their sugar by horse and bullock to the Barratta Creek Landing Place, where it was loaded aboard the small steamers for shipment to Townsville. The bagged sugar was now loaded upon railway wagons at Pioneer Mill and transported over a branch line (built by Drysdale Bros. in 1901) to Pioneer Siding, before being railed to Townsville on the Ayr tramway. This was an enormous saving in time and cartage costs. Unfortunately, the new tramway did not reduce Australian Estates' need to double handle its sugar on its way to Townsville for shipment to Brisbane. Unlike Pioneer, Kalamia Mill was not connected to the Ayr Tramway by the building of a branch line. Kalamia's sugar still had to be loaded at the mill and brought by horse drawn wagons to the station at Ayr for re-loading upon the tramway's carriages before being railed to Townsville. However, it is reasonable to assume Australian Estates were still pleased at this new arrangement, for

⁸ Sec., Ayr Tramway Board, Townsville, to the Commissioner of Railways, Brisbane, 28 January 1900, Q.S.A., A/9122, Bundle headed "Ayr Tramway: General Conditions, Specification, Schedule of Quantities etc."

⁹ Summarized from details in Donnelly, The Port of Townsville, pp. 31-32.

they no longer needed to transport their sugar to the Plantation Creek wharf over a tramline on land owned by the A.N.Z.M. Co. As mentioned in Chapter 6.6, the threat of losing the right to use this tramline was one of the reasons which forced Australian Estates to abandon their efforts to turn Kalamia Mill into a central factory.

The Ayr Joint Tramway Board operated the Ayr to Stuart tramline until it was purchased by the Crown in late 1910. The line was then finally extended to Bobawabba, thus providing an uninterrupted link between Bowen and Townsville.¹⁰

¹⁰ For a very brief synopsis of the tramline's operation in the 1900s see Donnelly, The Port of Townsville, pp. 30-33 and Connolly, John Drysdale and the Burdekin, pp. 101-102. For primary source material see Q.S.A., A/9120-9123.

APPENDIX THREE

Occupational Background of Drysdale Bros' and Australian Estates' Tenant Farmers, 1906-1912

Name	Farmer Occupation	Source
Abdul, F.	Unknown	
Ah Chong	Unknown	
Ah Dip	Unknown	
Allison Bros.	Unknown	
Aoba, T.	Unknown	
Archbold, S.	farmer, Mossman	Q.E.R., 1905
Bentley, H.	employee at Pioneer Mill	N.Q.H., 19 November 1910, p. 43
Boorman Bros.	Unknown	
Brown, E.	ploughman, Pioneer Estate	Q.E.R., 1906
Brown, T.D.	Plantation Manager, Pioneer Estate	Q.E.R., 1906
Butterworth, C.F.	Unknown	
Clarke, C.D.	Unknown	
Conley, W.	sugar boiler, Kalamia Mill	Q.E.R., 1905
Corbett Bros.	Unknown	
Craig, W.	Drysdale Bros. lessee in the 1890s	Fox (1923: 72b)
Crees, H.C.P.	farmer, Mossman	Q.E.R., 1905
Crees, S.	Unknown	
Crofton, C.R.	storekeeper, Pioneer Estate	Fox (1923: 373)
Daly, T.	Australian Estates lessee in the late 1890s	K.M.A., Manager's Instruction & Memoranda Book, 1898-1901, p. 21
Dillane, M.	clerk, Q.N. Bank, Mossman	N.Q.H., 19 November 1910, p. 45
Duggan, E.T.	Unknown	
Dwyer, J.	overseer, Pioneer Estate	Q.E.R., 1906
Fleet, F.	labourer, Brandon	Q.E.R., 1905
Frew, R.	Unknown	
Galloway, W.H.	Unknown	
Geary, H.V.	dairyman, Airdmillan	Q.E.R., 1906
Graham, W.	Unknown	
Hean, J.D.	Unknown	
Hodges, W.	miner, Charters Towers	Q.E.R., 1903
Holmes, A.	clerk, Airdmillan Estate	Q.E.R., 1906
Huskinson, J.	grazier	Q.E.R., 1905
Jensen, P.	Unknown	
Jones, T.	Unknown	
Kastner, H.H.	Unknown	
Kirwin, D.	farmer, Mossman	N.Q.H., 19 November 1910, p. 46
Knobel, A.	sugar boiler, Pioneer Mill	Connolly (1964: 53)
Leeds, J.	ploughman, Kalamia Estate	Q.E.R., 1905
Lewty, A.D.	sugar boiler, Kalamia Mill	Q.E.R., 1905
Linedale, W.E.	overseer, Mt. Molloy Copper Mine	Q.E.R., 1905
Loveridge, A.	engine driver, Pioneer Mill	Q.E.R., 1905
Loveridge, G.	Engine drive, Pioneer Mill	Q.E.R., 1905
Mackenzie, W.	engine driver, Pioneer Mill	Q.E.R., 1905
Margetts, F.	miner	Fox (1923: 727)
Marron, T.	Unknown	

Name	Farmer Occupation	Source
McFarlane, G.	engine driver, Pioneer Mill	Q.E.R., 1905
McLaughlin, R.	overseer, Pioneer Estate	Fox (1923: 728)
Murray, T.	butcher, Brandon	Q.E.R., 1907
Noak, M.	Drysdale Bros. lessee in the late 1890s	J.C.U., PMR/JA/3, p. 663
Olsen, O.E.	overseer, Kalamia Estate	Q.E.R., 1905
Priestley, J.	ploughman, Pioneer Estate	Q.E.R., 1905
Pringle, J.	farmer, Mossman	N.Q.H., 14 May 1906, p. 2
Pitt, D.	Drysdale Bros. lessee in the late 1890s	J.C.U., PMR/JA/3, p. 663
Pyott, A.	Unknown	
Radcliffe, F.	overseer, Pioneer Estate	Q.E.R., 1905
Radcliffe, G.	Drysdale Bros. lessee in the late 1890s	J.C.U., PMR/JA/3, p. 663
Scarci, D.	lessee farmer of Australian Estates at Maidavale in the late 1890s	K.M.A., Account Journal, 1897-1904, p. 32
Shann, A.	farmer, Mackay	pers. comm., Mrs. F. King
Sibson, A.	Unknown	
Spelta, V.	lessee farmer of Australian Estates at Maidavale in the late 1890s	K.M.A. Account Journal, 1897-1904, p. 32
Stanton, A.	Unknown	
Sun Sam Wah	Unknown	
Tait, R.	Unknown	
Taylor, J.	overseer, Pioneer Estate	Q.E.R., 1905
Thomas, W.H.	Unknown	
Thornton, J.H.	Unknown	
Todd, H.S.	labourer, Ayr	Q.E.R., 1905
Walker, J.McB.	Unknown	
Whitson, W.B.	book-keeper, Pioneer Estate	Q.E.R., 1907
Wilmington, E.	Unknown	

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- b. **Young MS:** Two letterbooks that contain copies of the private letters of Charles Young to John S. Hill and R.J. Jeffray, London, W.V. Brown, Townsville and E.M. Long, Habana, 1893-1900, and the weekly correspondence to the Manager of the Union Mortgage and Agency Co. of Australia, Melbourne, 1897-1899.

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V. Almanacs, Journals and Newspapers

Abbreviations:

B.S.E.S.	Bureau of Sugar Experiment Stations
J.C.U.	James Cook University of North Queensland
m	microfilm
J.O.L.	John Oxley Library
U.Q.	University of Queensland

Examined closely for the dates indicated.

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North Queensland Register, 1901-1930. U.Q. m.

Planter and Farmer, January 1882 - December 1886. J.C.U. m.

Port Denison Times, 1864-1910. U.Q. m.

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The Sugar Journal and Tropical Cultivator, Vol. 1 (1) February 1892- Vol. 9 (12) June 1900. B.S.E.S.

Townsville Daily Bulletin, December 1885 - December 1888, J.O.L. m.

Townsville Herald, July 1886 - August 1891. J.C.U. m.

Other papers used for an issue or two such as the Brisbane Courier, Mackay Mercury and the Queenslander have not been listed, but are referred to in the footnotes.

VI. Maps/Survey Plans

1. Ayr Historical Society

- c. 1885 Sketch Plan of Airdmillan, Kalamia and Seaforth Sugar Estates, Burdekin Delta, North Queensland.

2. Department of Mapping and Surveying

- 1878 K103/534, Survey Plan of the Lower Burdekin Pastoral Runs north of the Burdekin River to Mt. Elliot showing pastoral resumptions.

3. Queensland State Archives

- 1864 L7/11 Plan of the Burdekin River from Antill's Station to its Mouth with the Anabranh, Town reserve and other surveyed portions.
- 1868 L Map of Kennedy Pastoral District showing stations, surveyed roads and bush tracks.
- 1882 JG1 Sheet 1, Part of the Kennedy Pastoral District showing the Burdekin Delta.
- 1886 JG1 Sheet 1, Part of the Kennedy Pastoral District showing the Burdekin Delta.
- 1894 Part of the Kennedy Pastoral District showing the Burdekin Delta. Sheet 1.
- 1909 JG1 Sheet 1, Part of the Kennedy Pastoral District showing the Burdekin Delta.
- 1911 M5/8 Map of the Inkerman Estate.
- 1913 5/8 Map of Inkerman Parish.
- 1914 L7/1 Map of Antill Parish.
- 1914 L7/8 Map of Jarvisfield Parish.
- 1929 L7/1 Map of Antill Parish.
- 1931 ½L6/18 Map of Scott Parish.
- 1931 L7/8 Map of Jarvisfield Parish.
- 1931 L7/11 Map of Morrill Parish.
- 1931 M5/8 Map of Inkerman Parish.
- 1931 M5/11 Map of Leichhardt Downs Parish.
- 1934 L6/1 Map of Abbotsford Parish.

4. Townsville Titles Office

Listed below are the main survey plans used in re-constructing the subdivision of the major Lower Burdekin Estates.

Acaciafields: N4961 (1896), N4962 (1906), N4964 (1925), N4965 (1915).

Airdmillan: Antill 281: N2280 (1888), N2284 (1896), N2285 (1898), N2286 (1900), N2287 (1903).

Antill 296: N2352 (1896), N2356 (1895), N2358 (1910), N2359 (1910), N2360 (1910), N2361 (1910).

Antill 366: N2354 (1903), N2366 (1893), N2367 (1896),

- N2368 (1899), N2372 (1911), N2373 (1911).
 Antill 442: N2400 (1911).
 Antill 451: N2400 (1911), N2401 (1912), N2402 (1903),
 N2403 (1895).
 Chiverton: N2364 (1916), N2376 (1893), N2377 (1910).
 Ivanhoe: N2265 (1908), N2266 (1912), N2267 (1916), N2268 (1882),
 N2269 (1906), N2271 (1911), N2274 (1909), N2276 (1906), N2277
 (1907).
 Jarvisfield: N5518 (1910), N5521 (1909).
 Kent: N6389 (1927).
 Macdesme: N2405 (1905), N2412 (1912).
 Maidavale: N4935 (1897), N4936 (1911), N4937 (1909), N4938 (1909),
 N4939 (1914).
 Mount Gemmell: N4866 (1893), N4867 (1896), N4869 (1896), N4870
 (1902).
 Norham: N2249 (1879), N2251 (1900), N2252 (1902), N2256 (1906),
 N2258 (1906), N2259 (1906), N2260 (1906), N2261 (1906), N2262
 (1910).
 Pfeiffer: N2603 (1918).
 Plantation Creek Blocks, Antill 389: N2379 (1907), N2380 (1907).
 Antill 390: N2383 (1907), N2388 (1906), N2389 (1907),
 N2393 (1903).
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X. Oral History (Interviews and Correspondence)

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- Burke, F. Son of the late John Burke, who settled on the Lower Burdekin in the 1880s. Interviewed at Ayr in January 1984.
- Burstall, H. (late) Son of the late Harry Burstall, who selected land at Airdmillan in the 1900s. Interviewed at Ayr in June 1983.
- Chalmers, J. A former cane inspector for Pioneer Sugar Mill. Interviewed at Ayr, November 1984.
- Conley, R. Son of the late William Conley, who purchased Seaforth Estate in 1914. Interviewed at Seaforth in June 1983.
- Giddy, C. Son of the late Joe Giddy, who selected land at Macdesme in the 1900s. Interviewed at Ayr in January 1984.
- Giffard, V. Wife of the late Phillip William Giffard, cane farmer at Klondyke during the 1910s. Interviewed at Ayr in January and November 1984.
- Haigh, D. (late) Former Burdekin Shire Council Engineer. Interviewed at Ayr in June 1983. Subsequent correspondence July 1983.
- King, F. Daughter of the late A.A. Shann, a tenant farmer of Drysdale Bros. at Klondyke in the late 1900s. Interviewed at Ayr in November 1984.
- Munro, C. Grandson of the late Colin Munro, the original selector of Drynie. Interviewed at Brisbane in December 1983.
- Smith, B. Daughter of the late Charles Carcary, cane farmer at Mirrigan in the 1900s. Interviewed at Ayr in November 1984.
- Webber, J. (late) Son of the late J. Webber, cane farmer at Mirrigan in the 1910s. Interviewed at Ayr in December 1986.

